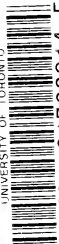


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AN

ANALYTICAL COMMENT

ON THE FIRST PART

OF

The Revelation;

BEING

AN ATTEMPT TO ELUCIDATE BOTH THE HISTORIC
AND PROPHETIC SENSE

OF THE

Epistles to the Seven Churches of Asia.

BY HENRY GIRDLESTONE, A. B.

RECTOR OF COLTON, NORFOLK.

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"Hæc ita, Lector, disserui, non temere asserui. Rem vero totam
Ecclesiæ ex verbo Dei arbitrandam defero; cujus judicio, ut par est,
meam de hoc mysterio sententiam lubens submitto."

MEDE'S WORKS, p. 532.

LONDON: HATCHARD AND SON, PICCADILLY.

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1833.



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P R E F A C E .

THE Revelation divides itself into three main branches ; the two latter being more intimately connected than the former : for although the first part, which is here attempted, is indeed connected with both the others, yet not so intimately but that it may with some advantage form the subject of a separate publication.

To touch any part of the subject is both a delicate and difficult undertaking. Scaliger, who asserted the wisdom of Calvin for not commenting on the Revelation, and Voltaire, who insinuated the weakness of Newton because he did, are still mentioned occasionally with approbation ; as well as South, who said with his characteristic point, that the study of that book either found a man mad, or made him so. But all such sayings imply too much contempt, not

only of the commentator, but of the text itself.* Paine levelled at once the imputation of a distempered brain at the author of the *Apocalypse*. “But,” says Gilbert Wakefield, “that the random fiction of a distempered brain should be marked with such characters of consistency and truth as are found on *the face of the Apocalypse* is to me perfectly inconceivable: not much unlike a suspicion that the fabric of St. Peter’s at Rome was not the work of architectural ingenuity, but thrown up in its present form by an earthquake or a volcano.”†—(Examination of the Age of Reason.) Sir Isaac Newton, having examined the *external evidence of the Apocalypse* found, to use his own words, “no other book of

* “Nullum majorem afferre solet ignaris inscitia voluptatem quam expeditum fastidiosumque contemptum.”—*Jul. Scaliger*.

† The pious Vitrina rises into a much higher strain:—“Nemo mortalium pios ac verbi Dei reverentes homines unquam abducat a libri hujus lectione et meditatione. Vident in eo characterem, et signaculum Sp. S. qui character est *spiritualitas*, se exerens in quæsitissimis locutionibus, desumptis ex interiore Dei sapientiâ et mystico statu animæ, in spiritualem formam transfusæ, ut qui librum legunt, sentiant se non duci tantum, sed rapi ad Deum; evehi ad mirabilia ejus contemplanda; sanctificari in ejus gloriâ; et inflammari igne cœlesti, hoc est, purissimo et tenerrimo Dei amore, quo flagrant sancti et purificati in cœlis. Ita est nihil hic leve, otiosum, vulgare: omnia solida, mascula, fortia, spiritualia, sublimia, non cogitata ab ingenio humano, nec cogitanda.”—*Vitr. præf.*

the New Testament so strongly attested or so early commented as this.” Without staying to enquire whether this language be not perhaps rather too strong, the information is certainly curious which he gives us concerning his inducement to comment on it himself. It was the success of others, for among the interpreters of his own age, he says, there was scarce one who had not made some discovery worth knowing, and and thence it seemed to him, that God was about to open those mysteries.

Since however in ancient as well as modern times the main objection against even the authenticity of this prophecy has sprung out of its obscurity (Eus. H. E. vii. c. 35,) it may be worth while briefly to examine what is the nature and extent of that obscurity.

First then it may be proper to recollect *What is the design and use of prophecy in general.* The *design* of all prophecy is to bear testimony to the Lord Jesus Christ, both as to his person and offices, and especially his regal office. “The testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy.” Rev. xix. 10. “The spirit of Christ which was

in them (the prophets) testified before of the sufferings of Christ, and of the glories that should follow." 1 Pet. i. ii. (See Hurd, Serm. 2.) About the *use* of prophecy there has been some difference of opinion. On this subject Sir I. Newton has given occasion to a very prevailing error. According to him the *main use* of prophecy is this: "that after its fulfilment, being interpreted by the event, the providence of God may be illustrated." This statement must be received with some reserve; and accordingly Dr. Hey (who has been called "of all modern writers the true theologian" Crito Cant. p. 307) has guarded it with the utmost caution. "This passage," says he, "gives a right idea of interpreting *by the event*; and is therefore particularly applicable to those prophecies whose existence, or whose meaning is not conceived to be known but from their completion; *those which have raised no expectation*, or none corresponding to the meaning which they are found to contain." (Lectures B. i. c. 17, § 15.) But it has been misunderstood as applicable to prophecy in general. Whereas, "it is doubtless a

mistake," says Bishop Sherlock, "to conceive prophecy to be intended solely, or chiefly, for their sake in whose time the events predicted were to happen. The ancient prophecies were *chiefly* intended to support the faith and religion of the old world." (Use and Intent of Prophecy, Disc. 2.) Combine these statements, and you have the complete use of prophecy. *When fulfilled*, it serves both to confirm the believer and to convince even the unbeliever. But even *before the fulfilment* it serves to console the believer ; assuring him that the future, whether good or evil, will not be fortuitous, and that ultimately it shall turn out triumphantly for him. It needs only be hinted that human character was also to be *proved*, among other means by the records of divine revelation, and especially by the prophetic roll. By one simple expedient both these uses have been secured. The truth of prophecy was necessary to its use, and a certain degree of obscurity was necessary to secure its truth. Keeping in view both classes, believers and unbelievers, the Prophetic Spirit has communicated his informa-

tion with a designed reserve. If it be true, as it is sometimes scornfully asserted, that prophecies will suggest their own fulfilment, it is still more true that the sacred prophecies have been so constructed, in general, as to defy all mankind either to fulfil or to defeat them. This has been effected by the adoption of a figurative language, not invented for the purpose, but founded in nature and already in use. *To those who are unskilled in it* such a style will be necessarily obscure even after the prophecy has been fulfilled. "For no event," says Sherlock, "can make a figurative or metaphorical expression to be a plain one and literal, or restrain the language of prophecy to any one determinate sense, which was originally, and by design, capable of more." (Use and Intent, Disc. 2.) *But to those who are skilled in it*, the exact coincidence between the event and the prophecy *after its fulfilment* will be evident even in the minutest circumstances; and *even before its fulfilment*, at least the outline of the prophecy, and as the event approaches even something more, will be sufficiently intelligible. By these means is it

effected that “None of the wicked shall understand, but *the wise shall understand.*” Dan. xii. 10. The wise are they who, recollecting the source from which prophetic lore has been derived, apply themselves earnestly to the study of it, with all other aids possible, and certainly not without prayer for the aid of its divine author. Gen. xv. 8. 2 Pet. i. 20.)*

Applying now to the question *Of the obscurity of the Apocalypse*, it cannot by the believer be thought to be insuperable; for the very motto affixed to its title-page, announces a blessing to those who shall peruse it. True blessedness or happiness consists in such an intercourse with God himself as his creatures are capable of, and it implies some similitude of character: but we can neither imitate nor adore an unknown God. This prophecy therefore cannot convey any special blessing unless it reveal him in some remarkable degree. And it does so

* “Non vult enim Deus verbum propheticum ab omnibus intelligi, quæ dura quidem carni, sed tamen vera oratio est.” Hos. xiv. 10. Dan. xii. 10. “Paravit has dapes in gratiam amicorum suorum, quos solos Sanctuarii luce collustrat, et arcanorum consiliorum participes reddere dignetur.” John xv. 15. *Vitringa præf.*

in fact. *Its language* though symbolical is an universal and fixed language, reduced to rule and subject to criticism. *Its plan* is exquisite, and symmetry itself. *As to the past*, although indeed the number of dazzling events in history has tempted some to an unskilful application of them, yet the great outline of history is sufficient for the understanding of it; for there is nothing in the Apocalypse which is not great. *As to the future*, it is the key to the prophets, of whose predictions so much remains to be fulfilled, as much as the Epistle to the Hebrews is the key to the law. "He that would understand the old prophets, said Sir I. Newton, must begin with this." The remark is just. This is the portico, added to the building last, but the main entrance into it. And the specific blessing of the prophecy is, that it reveals the tenderness of our God and Saviour even in the mysterious adversities of his Church, together with his pledge of a happy issue out of them all. Even the neglect of it has been conceived by some to be among the means by which those adversities have been perpetuated. It was the opinion of

Dr. S. Clarke, "that one of the greatest artifices by which religious tyranny has been kept up in the world, has been the discouraging men from considering soberly the prophetic part of the New Testament," Sermon 9.

But the discordance of its Commentators is objected as a decisive proof of the insuperable obscurity of the Apocalypse. A remark of a general nature by Leibnitz (and a favorite with D. Stewart, Phil. Essay 3.) is not without its application even to this subject. "Truth is more generally diffused in the world than is commonly imagined; but it is too often disguised and even corrupted by an alloy of error, which conceals it from notice, or impairs its utility. But detecting it wherever it is to be found among the rubbish which our predecessors have left behind them, we have not only the advantage resulting from the enlargement of our knowledge, but the satisfaction of substituting, instead of a succession of apparently discordant systems, a permanent and eternal philosophy, varying widely in its forms from age to age, yet never failing to exhibit a portion of truth as its

immutable basis." When it is considered at how early a date the first commentators wrote, though we should begin no higher than with Andreas of Cesarea, whose work was compiled from those of his predecessors, and through how long a space the line of his successors has extended, some discordance of opinion is surely not very wonderful. Yet, in fact, their discordance has never been so great as is commonly supposed. They disagree like the clocks of a great city, in the minutes not in the hour: their disagreement is less than their agreement. He that understands our common Christianity, knows that with an almost infinite variety of opinions upon secondary and minor points, there is an almost universal consent upon first principles. And he that has studied the Apocalypse knows, that with a vast variety of difference as to the detail, yet as to the main there is, first, a general harmony among all Protestants, and next a great coincidence upon many leading points even among Protestants and Romanists, among both ancients and moderns. For instance, Bossuet himself has quoted the

ancient fathers for a constant tradition, that the Babylon of the Apocalypse was Rome. What more could you expect ? For that it was *modern* Rome would be rather too much to expect from the *ancient* fathers.

One may venture a step beyond even this, and state in general, *What sort of a revelation it has proved in fact.* The rill of prophecy, so small at its source, but swelled by tributaries through every age, at length in the Apocalypse grew, like the flood in Ezekiel's vision—"the waters were risen that they could not be passed over." But still men forded them to the ancles and to the knees. As many indeed as expected in the first ages of the Church to understand minutely the fates of the last, found themselves always defeated ; as much as if they had attempted to read the inner roll of a seven-fold volume. But as many as were content with that information which their own times required, appear to have enjoyed it ; the same Prophetic Spirit who had indited the volume, assisting them to unfold it gradually, at nearly an equal pace with the march of Divine Providence. So true is the remark—that

to explain this prophecy was not the work of one man or of a single age. The almost immediate fulfilment of some of its predictions among the *seven churches* naturally invited the Church to the consolatory hope of the overthrow of *Paganism*, which was written in the same volume. At the *Reformation* its delineation of the symbolic Babylon, and its commands to come out of her, served to emancipate the Reformers from any undue fear of schism, and they came out. And at the present day it begins again to sustain the Church in expectation of her worst but last struggle.* First and last, however, these results have been attained through the ministry of the expositor, who stood on the hatches throughout the storm and pointed to the haven's mouth, though in appearance but a cloud. Instead of a series of prophets, as to the Jews, it seemed good to the wisdom of God to bestow on the Gentiles, once for all, the

* Vitringa expected this would be the case. "Erit forte non—nemo unus, vel jam hoc tempore natus, vel post nasciturus, et erunt cum tempore non nulli plures, qui acutius sensu iudicii præditi, a majore lumine Sp. S. collustrati, majore diligentia et attentione usi, et ab eventibus secuturi temporis instructiores facti, dubia, ad quæ hæremus, feliciter expedient."—*Vitr. præf.*

Revelation of our Lord, and afterwards to raise up a series of uninspired expositors. Whatever they missed, this at least they always saw : they saw in the last of the prophecies the full developement of the first ; and that, as our Lord, although through sufferings, yet passed on to his glory, so his Church, however corrupted by subtlety, or persecuted by rage, should still attain to victory both in heaven and on earth. At last, the seed of the woman shall bruise the serpent's head.

Astonishing indeed has been the multiplicity and variety of commentators on this book ; some compilers, some selectors, some originals of every degree in talent, learning, and rank. A King of England stands among the multitude ; and truly was it said by the Bishop who edited the works of James the First—"Kings have a kind of interest in that book beyond any others."

With regard to the present attempt, former lights have not been neglected.* Every modern

* "Hæc enim unica et certa est veri investigandi ratio, sententias quæ prostant præstantium virorum, prius modeste expendere, quam ingenii operam ad alia applicemus ; ne forte videamur aliorum contemnere labores, et potius ex petulantia ingenii, et prurigine, illos deserere quam ex sincero veritatis studio, quod fieri nefas."—*Vitr. in Apoc.* p. 379.

student of this book who would arrive, by the shortest cut, at whatever almost is necessary to elucidate the *letter* of it, must have recourse to Vitringa; and once for all I acknowledge my greatest obligations to him. The *version* is based on that of Dean Woodhouse (who translated directly from the text of Griesbach), and is only altered so far as, it is presumed, to amend it here and there; a cautious examination of the punctuation being also reserved. As to the *comment*, whatever is merely necessary to justify the version being first separated and thrown into *note* at its foot, it attempts to elucidate, always the historic sense first, and then the prophetic by internal as well as external evidence. It is closed by a brief general review just to collect the result of the analysis. I do not pretend to have verified all the references; which are recorded, not to make a parade of second-hand learning, but that they may be consulted should it be thought necessary. Throughout I have studied brevity, recollecting a saying of D'Alembert, that the author is wont to fatigue himself to death with extending what the reader tires himself to death

with abridging: Yet after all I fear I may have fallen into the common error.

Approaching this ocean, notwithstanding the success of others and the buoys which they have laid down, yet I shudder as I survey the wrecks which are on every side. There is however much to encourage. Foremost stands the divine promise of a blessing to those who should explore this region. Besides, the light of history wider and wider still flings a path across the deep. We have the exhortation of Butler,* “to set down every thing which we think to be of any real weight at all in proof of Christianity, and particularly the many seeming completions of prophecy: for probable proofs, by being added, not only increase the evidence, but multiply it.” The example of Mede† invites to equal enterprize and modesty. We have the solemn warnings‡ of Bacon, and withal his beautiful prayer.

* Analogy, p. 390.

† “*Illud pro certo habeas, nisi in hisce talibus liberius paulo sentiendi, imo et errandi venia concedatur, ad profunda illa et latentia veritatis adyta viam nunquam patefactam iri.*” *Mede, præf. in Com.*

‡ “*Hoc opus desiderari statuo, verum tale est, ut magna cum sapientiâ et reverentiâ tractandum sit, aut omnino demittendum.*” *Bacon de Aug. Scient.* ii. 11.

“Thou, O Father, who gavest the *visible* light as the first born of thy creatures, and didst pour into man the *intellectual* light as the consummation of thy works ; be pleased to direct and protect this work, which coming from thy goodness may return to thy glory. Thou, after thou hadst reviewed the works which thy hands had made, didst behold every thing that it was very good, and thou didst rest with complacency in them : but man, reflecting on his works which he had done, saw that all was “vanity and vexation of spirit.” Wherefore if in thy work we labor with the sweat of our brow, thou wilt make us partakers of thy vision and of thy sabbath. We humbly beg that this mind may be stedfast in us ; and that thou, by our hands, as well as by the hands of others on whom thou shall bestow the same spirit, wilt please to convey a largess of new alms on the family of mankind. This petition we commend to thy everlasting love by our Jesus, thy Christ, God with us. Amen.

Earlham, January, 1833.

ON THE

Prophetic Sense of the Seven Epistles.

VITRINGA, and before him Witsius, Marck, More, and others, have stated at length the facts and arguments which relate to the interpretation of the Seven Apocalyptic Epistles, in a prophetic sense ; and from their writings, but chiefly from Vitringa, who appears to have read them all, the following sketch is digested.

There are three opinions of learned men on this subject. The first is, that the seven apocalyptic epistles are to be considered just in the same view as the apostolic epistles ; that the epistle, for instance, to the church at Ephesus, like the epistle of Paul to the same church, was intended primarily for the use of that church,

and secondarily for the use of the Universal Church, by way of inference and application : but that it contained no prophetic sense whatever. This has been, perhaps, the more general opinion.

The second goes into the other extreme ; denies any historic sense whatever, and contends for a sense which is solely, either *emblematic* or *prophetic* ; for this opinion admits of a subdivision.

Some contend that the epistles, though addressed by name to the seven churches in Asia, yet were not at all intended for their use in particular, but for the use of the Church in general. Asia they consider as an emblem of the world ; the seven churches in Asia as an emblem of the spiritual Church of Christ ; and the seven epistles as describing, emblematically, what the internal character of that Church would be in every age and place, with the addition of suitable counsel and exhortation, promises and threats. This appears to have been the opinion in very early times of Cyprian (ad Quirin. ii. 19), and of the earliest commentators extant ; of Victorinus towards the end of the third century ; of Ticonius towards the end of the fourth century ; of Arethas in the end of the

sixth or the beginning of the seventh century ; of Beda, Ambrose, and Ansbert ; and among the more modern of Grotius and Launæus, or Le Bui.

Others again contend with their class-fellows above, that the seven epistles were not at all intended for the use of the seven Asiatic churches in particular, but for the use of the Church in general, in this manner : that the character of each of the seven churches was merely a prophetic description of what the character of the Universal Church would be in seven successive periods, severally, and reaching to the age of the Millenium ; so that the counsel and exhortation, the promises and threats contained in each epistle were calculated to apply, with the greatest possible effect, to the condition and conscience of the Universal Church in each successive period. My usual means of information failing me here, and not being acquainted with the writings of *the earliest periodists*, I am ignorant whether *they* belonged to this subdivision of the second class, or to the third. But of those writers who are known to have maintained this opinion in general, of seven successive periods, the first was Primasius, the author of a commentary on the Apocalypse in the sixth century, though he is said to have written but

obscurely on the point. The next, in the twelfth century, was Joachim of Calabria, the famous Abbot whom Cœur de Lion and his court heard, with so much attention, expounding the Apocalypse, while they wintered at Messina on their way to Palestine. (Cave H. L. vol. ii. p. 278. Rog. de Hoveden Annal. pars post. p. 681, ed. Franc. 1601.) He was followed by some spiritual men of the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries; the most eminent of whom were Peter John Olivi, and Hubert de Casali; who also denounced the gross body of the Church of Rome as the Babylon of the Apocalypse. Whatever might be their particular opinion, they were periodists: but since the Reformation, Sakerides, Gallus, Crocius, Hoffman, and others, are to be ranked in this subdivision of the second opinion. These excluded any historic sense altogether.

The third opinion combines, with some modification, the other two. It is, that these epistles are to be considered as intended, in the first instance, for the seven churches of Asia, severally, as much as the epistle of Paul to the Ephesians was intended for their use; and that they are applicable, in the same manner as the epistle of Paul, to the Universal Church: But that, in addition to this, they are also *prophetically* descriptive of what *the cha-*

racter of the Holy Catholic Church would be in seven successive periods, severally, and reaching to the age of the Millenium exclusively ; (to which character the counsel and exhortation of each epistle is calculated to be the most appropriate ;) while the threat or promise of each epistle is no less prophetic of the *destinies* of that Church. The latter design, though not more real, they conceive to be the greater, and therefore the principal. It may be added, that the prevailing corruptions which are ascribed to the tempters or enemies of each church are conceived to mark the character of the Anti-christian spirit of each period. Of this opinion, since the Reformation, there have been many eminent men, Brightman, Forbes, Mede, More, Gill, Sir I. Newton, Vitringa, Lampe, and in our own time Mr. Cuninghame (Pref. to Dissertation, p. xxv. 3rd ed.) As it is this which is adopted in the following comment, the general grounds on which it rests are now to be stated.

First of all, it is acknowledged that the epistles are to be interpreted grammatically and *applied historically* to the seven churches in Asia. The arguments of Witsius so far are allowed. (De sensu Hist. an Prophet. Misc. Sacr. tom. i.) This is agreeable to the analogy of ancient prophecy, which depicts at large the existing

state of the church of Israel. The seven churches were not only in existence at the date of the Apocalypse, and under the peculiar charge of the Apostle John, but moreover it was among them that the earliest Gnostics succeeded most in seducing some from the faith. The epistles themselves are too plain and particular to make it a question whether they refer to existing facts ; and it is impossible to conceive that our Lord should even appear to impute to the seven churches praise which they could not appropriate, and especially blame which they did not deserve. One remark however of Witsius himself appears to have some bearing on this point. If *some* of the ancient prophecies concerning Tyre and Babylon are expressed in a phrase and style too grand to have been altogether borne out even by that remarkable fulfilment which has already been accomplished, he argues in common with others, that this only convinces the *believer* that Tyre and Babylon are sometimes the symbols of some other communities, in which all that is predicted shall yet be fulfilled to the very last letter. Now it is at least a question, whether *all* that was predicted of the seven churches in Asia has been fulfilled strictly in the historic sense : it may have been, or it may not ; for ecclesiastical history fails us very often here, and we have no proof of it.

Next with regard to the *prophetic sense*, it will be convenient to begin with the principal objection against it ; which is, that the periodists differ so much among themselves about the several periods to which they apply the several epistles, as thereby sufficiently to betray the falseness of their own principle. The *fact* is granted only in part, and so the inference fails : for there is a considerable harmony among them relative to the *early* periods ; and with regard to the *later*, they have only differed because they erred in common with almost all expositors on every part of the book as well as this, by interpreting too fast, and applying the predictions of the latest periods to their own age. Their *principle* of interpretation may be true therefore notwithstanding.

The first positive argument in favor of the prophetic sense is derived from the title of the *whole* book. It is called, not merely a prophecy (which it is elsewhere called, both at the beginning and end of it, i. 3, xxii. 19,) but a revelation of events “ which must quickly come to pass ”—that is, a prophecy in the strictest sense of that term. To this it is replied that it is so entitled, because the *general design* of it is prophetic, and accordingly the larger portion of it is occupied strictly in predicting events to

come. But besides that the seven epistle from a considerable portion of the book, that immediately after the announcement of its main design, it should start directly aside from it, and treat of matters merely moral and not at all prophetic, seems not to be consistent. It is replied again, that the epistles are prophetic of some events which should happen to the seven churches literally, and that too without condition or any reserve whatever depending on their repentance or otherwise. c. ii. 10, 14, 22, 24. iii. 4, 9, 10, 16. But granting this, yet something more than this was to be expected *from the prelude to the epistles*: for each of the three great divisions of the *whole* book is prefaced by a grand introductory hieroglyphic. c. i. 9-20. iv. 1-v. 14. x. 1-11. And the first (which is not to be considered as a prelude to the whole book, but only to this particular part of it) is to the full as sublime as either of the other two; and consequently leads us to consider it as the prelude to events of no less magnitude. Therefore, that this prophecy should either so suddenly start aside from its main design, or at most should be occupied in predicting events of comparatively small moment, the memory of which is in great part lost, seems not to be a satisfactory view of it; but since the whole book is entitled a prediction of future events, it

is to be interpreted as such in the largest sense, the analogy of the other parts of it so requiring, since there is nothing in the Apocalypse which is not great and sublime.

A second argument is derived from the very circumstances of the case. The book as a whole is plainly written for the use of the whole Church of Christ ; it seems out of character then, that so considerable a portion of it as these seven epistles should be addressed, not in the name of John (for then we should see a reason for it in the nature of his peculiar charge), but in the name of our Lord, not to the whole church, nor even to the churches of the more eminent cities of Asia, Africa, or Europe, as Antioch (for Jerusalem is out of the question), Alexandria or Rome ; but only to seven individual churches confined to a comparatively minute circle in the proconsular Asia. Can this be accounted for, except on the hypothesis that they were typical of the Universal Church ? It is true that Usher (de Episc. et Metropol. origine) has endeavoured to make it probable that these seven *cities* were metropolitan cities of the proconsular Asia, in which a Roman Prefect administered justice. He proves from Pliny, that under Vespasian this was the case with five of the seven, and he thinks it *probable*, that the

other two, Thyatira and Philadelphia, were soon after advanced to the same dignity. But on the other hand Vitrīnga, discussing the question, renders that not so probable, but rather improbable. Were it however ever so certain, is this probable? That our Lord should, like Constantine, think to dignify his Church by accommodating it to the constitution of the Roman Empire? Even after the age of Constantine, only a few of the metropolitan *cities* became the seat of metropolitan *churches*; and in the proconsular Asia of these seven, Ephesus only. On the other hand, of this there is no doubt, that in the proconsular Asia itself, there existed at the date of these epistles and immediately after, other churches, and for any thing that appears to the contrary, quite as eminent, at Hierapolis, Tralles, Magnesia, and Colosse: and it is obvious from the epistles themselves that some of the seven churches were of no very eminent character. Now it is the glory of our Lord, that he is the great Priest and King of the Universal Church, interceding for and protecting all its members; and it is not probable that he should be represented, as he is in the first vision of this book, as exclusively occupied in the superintendence and protection of the ministers and members of these seven churches—walking only among their lamp-stands, and

holding in his hand only their stars—except those seven were intended as a type of the whole.

A third argument is derived from the manner in which the Scriptures are wont to speak of certain persons and places sometimes *figuratively* only, but at other times more or less *typically*. Thus, “hear ye the word of the Lord, ye rulers of Sodom ; give ear unto the law of our God, ye people of Gomorrah.” Isai. i. 10. This is a mere *figure*, which the prophet applies to compare the iniquity of his people with that of the abominable cities. In this manner Sodom and Gomorrah are used in this prophecy, xi. 8. But here is an instance of quite another kind—“My servant David shall be King over them.” Ezek. xxxvii. 24. The prophet speaks thus of Christ, because by the purpose and providence of God David was raised to the kingdom of Israel, expressly to become a type of Christ in his regal office. Something in this manner Jezebel seems to be used in these epistles, ii. 20. Lastly, there is another similar, but not exactly the same case, in which persons and places are typical to a certain extent, although their names are not typically applied. Thus, “I will call my servant Eliakim, the son of Hilkiah ; and the key of the house of David will I lay upon his shoulder ; so he shall open and none shall shut, and he shall

shut and none shall open." Isai. xxii. 22. In the first instance, this must certainly be understood literally of certain historical personages, Shebna and Eliakim. 2 Kings, xviii. 18. But it should seem that these persons were designed, *in this particular instance*, to be typical of others; Shebna of some future evil governor, and Eliakim of Christ himself the righteous governor. This is probable, first, from its very place in the prophecy, mixed up as it is with other matter so much more grave and sublime than the mere historical fact here predicted; but it is yet more probable from this—that in one of these very epistles, iii. 7, our Lord has taken the typical office of Eliakim to himself, as the true antitype. In the same manner, throughout these epistles, whole churches are, to a certain extent, severally typical of the Universal Church in several successive periods of time.

The last argument is derived from the use in the Scriptures of *the number seven*. How frequent this use is, and especially in the typical economy of Moses, needs only to be mentioned. The reason of this we shall not be tempted to seek in the Pythagorean doctrine of the absolute perfection of the Hebdomad; it is obviously to be derived from the great work of creation (itself a type of a new and greater crea-

tion, Eph. ii. 10, iv. 24. 2 Cor. v. 17. Rev. xxi. 1), brought to perfection in the entire space of seven successive periods. Hence, primarily, the idea of entire and *perfect time* would naturally be connected with any seven successive periods, greater or less. And, secondarily, the idea of a *perfect work*, accomplished in any time whatever, would not unnaturally be connected with the same number. In fact, we find it used in the sacred writings, both ways. Thus *complete time* is implied in the sevens of days and years in the ceremonial law. Lev. xxiii. 6, 7, 36. xxv. 4, 5, 11. Num. xii. 15, 16. xix. 11. In the seven days preceding the typical destruction of Jericho. Josh vi. 3-5. And in the seven years preceding the typical division of the promised land (Masius ad Josh. xi. 18. xiv. 7.) Thus also a *perfect work* is implied in the seven lamps of the temple, a type of the Church. Exod. xxv. 31, 32. Zec. iv. 2. In the same manner—not to mention the other sevens in the Apocalypse—the seven lamp-stands, which represent the seven churches in Asia, and those seven churches themselves, are typical of the Holy Catholic Church, the perfect work of God. (Aug. Civ. Dei. xvii. 4, et ad. Gal. ii.)—If this be allowed, but it be objected again, that the seven epistles delineate, emblematically only, the character of the Church as it exists in every age and

place : it is replied, first, that not seven nor probably even a hundred epistles could represent the endless varieties of the Church considered in that way. But, next, this objection might have been more plausible had one single epistle, containing these seven varieties, been addressed to all the seven churches ; but since seven epistles were commanded to be addressed severally and successively to each of the seven, *in the circular order of their local situation*, this gives more probability to the notion of seven successive states, of the Universal Church, during the complete time of that dispensation which should intervene between the departure and the return of our Lord. Far however from relying solely, or chiefly, upon that, we appeal to evidence. And first to the *internal evidence*, derived from the epistles themselves, from which it appears that there is a close connexion between every part of these epistles, and those subsequent visions of the book which are acknowledged to relate to the destinies of the Holy Catholic Church. We appeal also to *external evidence* derived from ecclesiastical history, which proves that in its broad outline the Church has exhibited the successive phases, now waxing now waning, which are described in these epistles, and successively too in the very order in which they are described. Both these kinds of evi-

dence find their appropriate place in a just comment upon the seven epistles.

I venture now, after having maturely weighed the whole subject, and still with great reverence, to say, that perhaps not less than this was to be expected from a perfect prophecy, and the only one left for the *edification*, as well as *consolation*, of the Church during a long and trying dispensation. It was perhaps to be expected that, among the superior privileges of the Christian dispensation, by such a prophecy not only the hopes of the Church should be kept alive throughout its adverse course, by foretelling the rise, progress, and triumphant close of all its trials; but also that its changing character throughout its successive periods, should be delineated, not incidentally but directly. Such a prophecy would be the appropriate vehicle of all that particular approbation and censure, exhortation and counsel, as well as of all that predictive promise and threat, which the Holy Spirit might apply both to enlighten the mind and to purify the heart. In this kind of moral prediction the ancient prophets were frequently diffuse, but it would be discovered only incidentally in the Apocalypse, unless the seven epistles be interpreted in a prophetic sense. So interpreted, and connected with the other parts of the book, we

possess a perfect prophecy, embracing both the internal and external history of the Church—equally practical and consolatory ; in a word, every way a blessing.

AN ANALYTICAL COMMENT.

THE TITLE.

THE ORIGINAL TEXT IS AFTER THE CRITICAL EDITION OF
GRIESBACH.

- 1 ΑΠΟΚΑΛΥΨΙΣ Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ, ἣν ἔδωκεν αὐτῷ ὁ Θεός, δεῖξαι τοῖς δούλοις αὐτοῦ ἃ δεῖ γενέσθαι ἐν τάχει· καὶ ἐσήμανεν ἀποσείλας διὰ τοῦ ἀγγέλου αὐτοῦ τῷ δούλῳ αὐτοῦ Ἰωάννῃ.
- 2 Ὡς ἐμαρτύρησε τὸν λόγον τοῦ Θεοῦ, καὶ τὴν μαρτυρίαν Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ, ὅσα εἶδε.
- 3 Μακάριος ὁ ἀναγινώσκων, καὶ οἱ ἀκούοντες τοῦ λόγου τῆς προφητείας, καὶ τηρεῖν τὰ ἐν αὐτῇ γεγραμμένα· ὁ γὰρ καιρὸς ἐγγυς.

I.—1. *The revelation of Jesus Christ, which God gave him, to shew to his servants what must quickly come to pass : and he sent and signified*

V. 1. *The Revelation*.—Wakefield's rendering is *A Revelation*, but the word ἀποκάλυψις, although without the prepositive article, is properly rendered *The Revelation*; the titles of books in the Greek language being commonly expressed without the article, Πράξεις τῶν Ἀποστόλων. The Acts of the Apostles. Ἀσπίς Ἡρακλέους. The shield of Hercules, &c. See Middleton on Gr. Art. Luke, i. 1.

V. 1. *He sent and signified it*—Or made it known by signs and

2. *it by his angel to his servant John ; Who testified of the word of God, and of the testimony of Jesus Christ, whatever he knew.*
3. *Blessed is he who readeth, and they who hear the words of this prophecy, and keep what is written in it, for the set time is at hand.*

COMMENT.

I. *The origin of the Book*, v. 1, 2.

1. *The Revelation of Jesus Christ*.—This is in general the title of the book : and by the Revelation is meant the *prophecy*, as it is immediately after called, v. 3. But it is called the *revelation*, or discovery, says Sir I. Newton, with respect “to the Scripture of Truth,” which Daniel was commanded to *shut up* and seal till the time of the end. Dan. x. 21. xii. 4. 9.

2. In particular it is the revelation of Jesus Christ, both (1) *passively*, because God gave it

symbols ; in which sense the word was also applied to a profane oracle. “Ουτε λέγει, ουτε κρύπτει, ἀλλὰ σημαίνει. Heraclit. ap. Plut. et Iamblich.

V. 2. *Whatever he knew*.—In the version by W. Cooke, Greek Professor of the University of Cambridge, “as far as he knew.” The word εἶδω signifies sometimes to know by means of any of the senses. Jo. i. 40, 47. See Schleusner. This rendering therefore does not exclude the proper qualification of an apostle, that he was an eye-witness. See the Comment.

V. 3. *This prophecy*.—See Rom. xvi. 22. Col. iv. 16. 1 Thess. v. 27. 2 Thess. iii. 14, in the Greek, and the valuable note on 1 Cor. v. 9, in Middleton on the Gr. Art.

to him, and (2) *actively* because he sent it to us.

(1.) *Which God gave him to shew to his servants what must quickly come to pass.*—Prophecy, as well as every other gift, is first given to the Mediator, and then to men. This was the constant doctrine of our Lord himself. Jo. vi. 16. viii. 28. xii. 49. xiv. 10.—But this revelation God gave him, that he might shew it to his *servants* (ii. 20) not to his enemies. For, “none of the wicked shall understand, but the wise shall understand.” Dan. xii. 10. Both are necessary, the knowledge of the wise, that they may be consoled as well as saved, and the ignorance of the wicked, that the righteous judgments of God may be accomplished. Had all the Jews understood the prophecies, would they have crucified the Lord of Glory?—The events predicted in this *whole* book are those which shall *quickly come to pass*, and not the beginning only of the series; for even the coming of our Lord (one of the last of them, xix. 11.) is said to be quickly. iii. 11. xxii. 7, 12, 20. This is according to the usual style of prophecy; to call that space of time which we should esteem long, short by comparison with the eternity of God. Hag. ii. 6. Comp. Ps. xc. 4. 2 Pet. iii. 8. The events predicted here may, however, also be said to

come quickly, by comparison with the time in which some of them were revealed to Daniel. Dan. ii. 28. x. 1.

(2.) *And he sent and signified it*—or, according to the original force of the word, made it known by symbols.

[1.] *By his angel.* The angel sent was one of the seven angels which had the seven bowls, xvii. 1, xxi. 9; and it was our Lord that sent him. “I, Jesus, have sent mine angel to testify unto you these things,” xxii. 16. But, “the Lord God of the prophets sent his angel to shew his servants things which must quickly come to pass.” xxii. 6. See, then, whether our Lord Jesus be not the Lord God of the prophets. He sent his angel,

[2.] *To his servant John; who testified of the word of God, and of the testimony of Jesus Christ, whatever he knew.* The meaning is, not that John testified in this book of the visions which he had seen in Patmos; (that indeed he asserts afterwards; comp. xix. 10, xxii. 8); but that John testified, before he went to Patmos, by preaching the Gospel, as it was foretold by the prophets, and fulfilled by Jesus. In this sense the expressions are frequently used in this

prophecy. "I was in the island called Patmos, for the word of God and for the testimony of Jesus Christ." i. 9. He was in exile there for preaching the Gospel. He saw "under the altar the souls of those that were sacrificed for the word of God, and for the testimony which they held." vi. 9. "And the dragon was wroth with the woman and went off to wage war with the rest of her seed; those who keep the commandments of God, and hold the testimony of Jesus." xii. 17; comp. xix. 10, xx. 4. Matthæi hence infers the correct omission of $\tau\epsilon$ before $\epsilon\dot{\iota}\delta\epsilon\iota\gamma$ according to the better MSS. He subjoins to this title a motto, as it were, to the book expressive of

II. *Its Excellence*, v. 3.

Blessed is he who readeth, and they who hear the words of this prophecy, and keep what is written in it, for the set time is at hand.—Both he who studies it, (which is the proper force of $\delta\ \alpha\nu\alpha\gamma\iota\nu\acute{\omega}\sigma\kappa\omega\nu$; comp. Acts viii. 30) and they who only hear it explained by others, shall find it a *blessing* in common, if they keep it in their memory and in their heart: for, *the set time is at hand*, in which all these predictions shall be fulfilled, not of the trial only but of the reward also. This blessing is repeated, xxii. 7.

It has been questioned whether this title be a genuine part of the original book, and one objection against it is curious, namely, that the substance of it is found interwoven with the conclusion of the book, from whence it is inferred to have been borrowed, and so here only by interpolation. But we may as well reject the introductory passage, v. 4-8, for the same reason. On the contrary, it is the very character of the whole book to point a constant reference every where to itself. Besides, the word ἐσήμανε is used here, not in its looser sense as by Luke, Acts xi. 28, xxv. 27, but in that stricter sense in which it is used by John himself in his Gospel, xii. 33, xviii. 32, xxi. 19, namely for a more indirect intimation of the future, by symbols. Lastly, the epistle introductory which follows, begins simply—"John to the seven churches;" what John it was having been already expressed. The external evidence for it is also said to be complete, both from MSS. versions and the fathers. There is every reason therefore to rest satisfied, that we have here the genuine title of the book.

THE INTRODUCTION.

- 4 Ἰωάννης ταῖς ἐπὶ τὰ ἐκκλησίαις ταῖς ἐν τῇ Ἀσίᾳ·
 χάρις ὑμῖν καὶ εἰρήνη ἀπὸ τοῦ ὄντος, καὶ τοῦ
 ἑνός, καὶ τοῦ ἐρχόμενου· καὶ ἀπὸ τῶν ἐπὶ τὸ πνευ-
 5 μάτων ἃ ἐσὶν ἐνώπιον τοῦ θρόνου αὐτοῦ. Καὶ
 ἀπὸ Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ, τοῦ μάρτυρος τοῦ πιστοῦ τοῦ πρω-
 τότοκος τῶν νεκρῶν, καὶ τοῦ ἀρχῶν τῶν βα-
 σιλέων τῆς γῆς· τῷ ἀγαπῶντι ἡμᾶς, καὶ
 λύσαντι ἡμᾶς ἀπὸ τῶν ἁμαρτιῶν ἡμῶν ἐν τῷ
 6 αἵματι αὐτοῦ, Καὶ ἐποίησεν ἡμᾶς βασιλείαν,
 ἱερεῖς τῷ Θεῷ καὶ πατρὶ αὐτοῦ, αὐτῷ ἡ δόξα
 καὶ τὸ κράτος εἰς τοὺς αἰῶνας τῶν αἰώνων·
 ἀμήν.
- 7 Ἰδὲ, ἔρχεται μετὰ τῶν νεφελῶν, καὶ ὄψεται
 αὐτὸν πᾶς ὀφθαλμὸς, καὶ οἵτινες αὐτὸν ἐξε-
 κέντησαν· καὶ κόψονται ἐπ' αὐτὸν πᾶσαι αἱ
 8 φυλαὶ τῆς γῆς· ναὶ, ἀμήν. Ἐγὼ εἰμι τὸ Α
 καὶ τὸ Ω, λέγει κύριος ὁ Θεός, ὁ ὢν, καὶ ὁ
 ἑνός, καὶ ὁ ἐρχόμενος, ὁ παντοκράτωρ.

1.—4. *John to the seven churches in Asia.*

Grace to you and peace from him who is, and
 5. *who was, and who is to come; And from the*
seven spirits which are before his throne; and
from Jesus Christ, that faithful witness, the first
born of the dead, and the ruler of the kings of
the earth. To him who loveth us, and washed us
 6. *from our sins with his blood, And made us a*
kingdom of priests to his God and Father—to
him be glory and might for ever and ever.
Amen.

V. 4. *And who is to come.*—It is a familiar Syriasm to use the present participle for the future. But instead of considering ὁ ἐρχόμενος as instead of ὁ ἐλευσόμενος, it is more correct to consider it as instead of ὁ ἐσόμενος. In c. xvi. 5. Cod. ap. Beza reads ὁ ἐσόμενος. Wakefield renders it even here, “Who is, and who was, and who *will be*.” But the substitution of the verb *to come*, in this sense, is not peculiar to the Hebrew, or to the Greek of the synagogue. (See, in the Heb. and Sept. Ps. lxxi. 18. Is. xxvii. 6. xlvii. 7. Dan. ix. 26)—but is common in classic style, and in our own and other languages. Χρονος ἐξελλυθῶς. Æd. Tyr. “*Aspice venturo lætentur ut omnia seculo.*” Virg. Ecl. iv. It seemed proper to note this, because some have supposed that ὁ ἐρχόμενος might refer here to the Christ, and to his second advent.

V. 5. *That faithful witness.*—It is no part of my plan to notice here, or elsewhere, that departure from the Greek idiom which is so frequent in the diction of this prophecy. The *style* corresponds with the *matter*. “Vix reperias apud Joannem phrasin aliquam, nisi vel ex Daniele, vel ex aliquo propheta desumptam.”—*Andrewes, Resp. ad Bellorm. Apol.* p. 234. “Joannem tibi, lector Apocalypseos, propone Hebraice cogitantem, Græce scribentem.”—*Bengel. Appar. Crit. Fund. Cris. Apoc.* § 5, p. 488.

V. 6. *A kingdom of priests.*—βασιλείαν, ἱερεῖς, that is ἱερέων, says Wetstein. This reading approaches so near to the Heb. Exod. xix. 6, to which the passage refers, that I have thought myself justified in adopting our Eng. version of that place. The Sept. has βασίλειον ἱερατεύμα, with which 1 Pet. ii. 9. agrees.

To his God and Father.—I have left D. Woodhouse here, and fol-

7. *Behold, he is coming with the clouds, and every eye shall see him, and whoever have pierced him, and all the tribes of the earth shall bewail themselves because of him. Yea, verily. I am the Alpha and the Omega, saith the Lord God; who is, and who was, and who is to come, the Almighty.*

lowed Newcome and Wakefield, who have observed the established rule of construction for the Greek article. Comp. 2 Cor. i. 3. xi. 31. Col. i. 3.

V. 7. *And whoever have pierced him.*—The word ἐξέκλινθησαν is used by no other writer in the N. T. except John xix. 37. Both texts refer to Zec. xii. 10. In the Sept. Vat. ἐπιβλήσονται πρὸς με εἰς τὸν κατωρχήσαντο was perhaps the original rendering of the Heb. reading קָרַךְ saltarunt instead of תְּקַדְּשֻׁם transfigerunt. This is the conjecture of Cappel, and before him of Jerom; though, as Vogel thinks, the Heb. reading was always the same, because the verb קָרַךְ often signifies *exulting*, but never *insulting*. Indeed the Sept. Cod. Barberini and Ed. Aldin. has the same rendering as John. Cappel, Crit. Sacr. lib. ii. c. 1 and 8. ed. Vogel. The difference is not material. They shall look upon him whom they have *pierced*, would refer to the pain of the cross; or whom they have *insulted* to the disgrace of the cross.

V. 8. *The Lord God.*—Of these words the following clause, it has been contended, is merely a definition: “Who is, and who was, and who is to come,” a definition of Κύριος; and “the Almighty,” of ὁ Θεός.

The word Κύριος, when applied to the Supreme in the Sept. and in the New Testament *often* represents the Hebrew word *Jehovah*. See Matt. iii. 3. Mark i. 3. Luke iii. 4. Jo. i. 23. Comp. Isai. xl. 3. See also Matt. iv. 7. Luke iv. 12. Comp. Deut. vi. 16. The word *Jehovah* expresses *present, past, and future existence*. The word κύριος is also expressive of existence, from κύρω to exist. The clause therefore *who is, and who was, and who is to come*, is a definition of the term κύριος, itself a substitute for the term *Jehovah*. See Tilloch’s Dissert. 4. Daubuz on Rev. iv. 8, p. 197. Pearson on the Creed, p. 197. Note. Ed. 1741.

Again, the inspired penmen of the New Testament, when quoting the Hebrew Scriptures, render the Hebrew word *Elohim* by Θεός

COMMENT.

The introduction consists of two parts ; the Apostle's Salutation, and the great goal of the whole Prophecy.

I. *The Apostle's Salutation*, v. 4—6.

John to the seven churches in Asia.—Asia has at least four distinct significations. 1. It signifies sometimes that great division of the old world which is distinguished from Europe and Africa. 2. It signifies at other times all that region which extends westward from Pontus on the north, and from the gulf of Issus on the south ; and which was called by Appian and Strabo the great Chersonese, and Asia Minor. 3. Asia Minor was subdivided, according to

and ὁ Θεός. See Rom. iii. 8. Comp. Ps. xxxvi. 1. and Heb. i. 9. Comp. Ps. xlv. 6, 7. The Septuagint had *generally* done the same before them. The word *Elohim* (derived from עֶלֶם, which in the abstract denotes *power*, and in the concrete *powerful*) means, when employed personally and in its lower sense *ruling powers*, and in its highest sense *The All-powerful*. The conclusion of the clause, therefore, *The Almighty*, is a definition of the word Θεός, itself a substitute for *Elohim*. See Tilloch's Dissert. 5 ; who quotes also Hales' Dissert. on the Principal Prophecies.

It should be added, however, that the word παντοκράτωρ (which is equivalent to πάντων κρατῶν) is frequently used by the Septuagint for the word *Sabaoth*, and especially in the prophecies of Zechariah, one of which has been just referred to in the context. See Zec. i. 3-12, &c. τάδε λέγει Κύριος παντοκράτωρ. In Hebrew *Jehovah of Hosts*. But the hosts of Jehovah are the whole creation, for all things are subservient to him. Yet, whether ὁ Θεός in this passage be supposed to be substituted either for *Elohim* or *Sabaoth*, the observation above appears to be correct, that the latter clause is merely a definition of the terms Κύριος ὁ Θεός.

Varro, into two provinces, Cilicia beyond Mount Taurus, and Ionia on this side Taurus ; Ionia being that country which was bequeathed to Rome by Attalus, and comprising Mysia, Lydia, Caria, Phrygia, and Pisidia. This bequest of Attalus was called Asia by the Romans in the age of Cicero. 4. A part of this province, comprising only a portion of the western coast, and chiefly confined to Lydia, began in the age of Vespasian, as Usher thinks, to be called *the Lydian* or *Proconsular Asia* ; and this district was called Asia by the writers of the New Testament. (See Usher's Disquisition on Asia, properly so called. Cellarii Dissert. De Sept. Ecc. Asiæ, § 9, or the Univ. His. vol. v.) Here it was that the seven churches were situated, which are addressed in the Apocalypse.—The Apostle's Salutation includes both 1. prayer, and 2. praise.

1. *Grace to you, and peace.* He begins with prayer for grace as the cause, and peace as the consequence. He prays in the apostolic form, invoking God in three persons.

(1.) *From him who is, and who was, and who is to come.* The *Father* is thus expressed at iv. 8, 9, and it is there interpreted "who liveth for ever and ever." Comp. xi. 16, 17. The expres-

sion is a substitute for *Jehovah*. Comp. Exod. iii. 14. vi. 2, 3, and implies the eternity of God, especially with reference to his *promises*.

(2.) *And from the seven spirits which are before his throne.* The allusion is to a subsequent vision ; “and seven torches of fire were burning before his throne, which are the seven spirits of God.” iv. 5. These are quite distinct from the angels round about the throne. v. ii. The seven spirits are also found twice in connexion with the Lord Jesus. “Thus saith he that bath the seven spirits of God and the seven stars.” iii. 1. It is the Lord Jesus who has the seven stars. i. 16. Again, our Lord is described as a lamb “having seven horns and seven eyes, which are the seven spirits of God sent forth into all the earth.” v. 14 ; comp. i. 14. The seven spirits of God are according to the *general* interpretation both of the primitive fathers, and of the orthodox among the moderns, *the Holy Spirit*. Both in early and later times, however, and among Protestants as well as Romanists, a few have understood the seven spirits of God, to be “the seven angels who stood before God.” viii. 2. But in this prophecy, says Vitringa, the angels are every where called angels, and no where spirits ; as it were on purpose to distinguish those seven angels from these

seven spirits. Vitring. i. 4, viii. 2. Those seven angels have each their several commission, and are distinct both in person and office ; whereas, these seven spirits are always found in union. They are the seven lamps of one lamp-stand. iv. 5. The seven eyes of one lamb, v. 6, and cannot be separated. The apostle wishes, not only peace, as Hammond suggests, but *grace* and peace from these seven spirits, no less than from the Father and the Son (as is distinctly marked by the preposition) and this no apostle ever invoked from any created spirits. In this very book the worship of angels is forbidden. xix. 10, xxii. 9. Nor can this passage be compared, as Beza suggests, with 1 Tim. v. 21. For it is one thing to invoke heaven and earth *as witnesses*, and quite another to invoke *grace and peace*. The symbol is plainly a reference to Zec. iv. 1-14 ; and is there explained, “Not by might, nor by power, but by *my spirit*, saith the Lord of Hosts.” According to the scriptural use of the number seven, the seven spirits of God signify the one perfect spirit, a seven-fold flame. Matt. iii. 11. Acts ii. 3. Comp. Isai. xi. 2, where, if with the Chaldee paraphrast and many of the Jews, you understand by “the spirit of the Lord” the prophetic spirit, or the gift of prophecy, (as in Isai. lxi. 1 ; Num. xi. 25 ; Joel ii. 28 ; Hos. ix. 7.) You will have there also the

seven-fold spirit. See Vitringa on Isai. xi. 2. The whole salutation, therefore, though not in terms yet in substance, is like the apostolic benediction, 2 Cor. xiii. 13.

(3.) *And from Jesus Christ.*—He names him last as the special object of that praise which he almost immediately subjoins. Here he describes him by his threefold office.

[1.] *That faithful witness.*—In the epistle to Philadelphia, he is called “The Holy One, the True.” iii. 7. In the epistle to Laodicea, “Thus saith the Amen, the faithful and true witness, the prince of the creation of God.” iii. 14. And when at last he appears in solemn majesty to ratify all his truth; “Lo! a white horse! and he that sat upon him was called Faithful and True.” xix. 11. In all these places, there being an assertion of his truth in the prophetic office to be demonstrated in the execution of his regal office, there is a plain reference to Isai. lv. 4, “Behold, I have given him for a witness to the people, a leader and commander to the people.” Our Lord who is *The Truth* itself, Jo. xiv. 6, constantly appealed, in the exercise of his prophetic office, to the truth of that testimony which they were so unwilling to receive. Jo. iii. 32. viii. 14. xviii. 37. 1 Tim. vi. 13. And persevering

in his testimony before Pilate to the death, he became emphatically *The Great Martyr*. And thus his prophetic blends with his priestly office.

[2.] *The first born of the dead*.—The first born of Israel had all escaped death by the destroying angel in Egypt, and therefore all the first born were set apart for the Lord. But Aaron and the Levites *were made priests* as representatives of these. “Behold I have taken the Levites from among the children of Israel, instead of all the first born—to wait on their priest’s office.” Num. iii. 1-13. Exod. xiii. 12-15. Heb. xii. 23. Thus our Lord is described as *The Priest*; the representative of those who shall escape death, having himself escaped it first. But he is “*a priest upon his throne*,” Zec. vi. 13. Comp. Col. i. 15-18, where, after he has been described “as the first born (i. e. Lord) of *every creature*, because by him all things were created” (and therefore being Creator and Proprietor he was naturally Lord) it is added; “he is also the head of his body *the Church*, because he is the chief (i. e. Lord) the first born from the dead—that in all things he might have the pre-eminence.” Both here, and in the epistle to the Colossians, he is called first born of, or from, the dead—“not merely because he was the first to rise from death, but because when risen he assumed the

government of his church, and in all things possessed the pre-eminence." (See Mr. Gurney's Biblical Notes, Nr. 12.) It is worth while to observe that this use of the term *first born* sprung from the privilege bestowed by divine authority, on the eldest son. For to Cain God promised with regard to Abel, "And unto thee shall he be *subject*, and thou shalt rule over him. Gen. iv. 7. These are the very terms by which Eve was subjected to Adam. Gen. iii. 16. Paul indeed argues that one reason why man ought to govern the woman is, because "Adam was *first formed*, then Eve." 1 Tim. ii. 12. Thus Cain should have been lord over Abel, independently, in that early age, of the double portion. Deut. xxi. 17. When indeed, by the election of God, the one was severed from the other, the double portion came to be called the *birth right*, and the lordship to be called *the blessing*. Comp. Gen. xxv. 29-34, xxvii. 29-36. 1 Chron. v. 1, 2. In other words, when by the *blessing* of God the younger had the *chief* privilege transferred to him, by becoming "*the chief ruler*" he became the *first born*. All this is confirmed by the language of the rabbies, in which God himself is called the first born of the world. (See Wetstein and Middleton on Gr. Art. Col. i. 15, the objections of the latter of whom against Schleusner appear to be inconclusive. See also Sir G. Rose, *Scriptural*

Researches, p. 227.—Our Lord then is here described as a priest, but still “a priest upon his throne,” and thus his sacerdotal blends with his regal office.

[3.] *And the ruler of the kings of the earth.* The Greek terms for *ruler* and *king* are used synonymously. (Comp. in Heb. and Sept. Isai. lv. 4; 1 Chron. xxix. 22.) Hence “the ruler of the kings of the earth” is the same as “the king of kings,” a title of frequent use among eastern monarchs. Ezra, vii. 12. Thus is he afterwards introduced by name, “King of kings and Lord of lords.” xvii. 14; xix. 16. During the typical kingdom this was largely foretold. Ps. ii. 10, lxxii. 11, lxxxix. 27. He is twice a king. He is “the first-born of every creature (or Lord of all,) because by him all things were created.” Col. i. 15. But he is also the ruler of the kings of the earth by virtue of his merits as mediator. Matt. xxviii. 18; Ph. ii. 9; Rom. xiv. 9. From our Lord thus described by his three-fold office of prophet, priest, and king, he wishes, as well as from the Father and the Holy Spirit, grace and peace. “*Grace*, the free favor of the Eternal Majesty, delivering from the greatest evil, and bestowing the greatest good: and *peace*, the tranquillity which results from the rational hope

of possessing such favor. These blessings are not of that kind which one creature is competent to bestow upon another. To desire such blessings, either in the mode of direct address, or in that of precatory wish, from our Lord Jesus Christ, equally with him "who is, and who was, and who is to come," drives us to the necessary conclusion that Christ and the Father are *one*, in the perfection which originates the highest blessings, and in the honor due for the gift of them." (Dr. J. P. Smith, *Scrip. Test. of the Messiah*, bk. iv. c. 2 § 3). His salutation ends with a burst of praise.

2. *To him who loveth us, and washed us from our sins with his blood, and made us a kingdom of priests to his God and Father, to him be glory and might for ever and ever. Amen.* Comp. 1 Pet. iv. 11. He has made us partakers of all his honors. In the exercise of his *prophetic* office, "Having loved his own that were in the world, he loved them unto the end," and washed his disciples feet *for our example*. Jo. xiii. 1-17. But he has done more; "he has washed us from our sins in his blood;" thereby inaugurating us even into his *highest offices*. It is the remark of Lampe (fragm. in Apoc.) that the term *to wash* being never confounded with that which is applied to the *sprinklings* of the law, he alludes

here to the *inaugural washings* of the priests, and indeed of the whole people. Exod. xix. 6, 9. Lev. viii. 6. And that this is correct is evident, for the very words of the original promise are quoted here, "And ye shall be unto me a kingdom of priests, and a holy nation." Comp. Isai. lxi. 6. 1 Pet. ii. 5, 9. This praise is the more appropriate, because the privilege for which it is rendered, that we shall be priests and kings with him, is the great and repeated promise of this prophecy. See v. 9, 10. xx. 6.

II. *The great goal of the whole Prophecy,* v. 7, 8.

1. In immediate connexion with the mention of the humiliation and death of our Lord, the great goal of the whole prophecy, *his glorious appearing* is stated by a reference to two of the ancient prophecies.

(1.) *Behold he is coming with the clouds.* The reference is to Dan. vii. 13, 14—"I saw in the night visions, and *behold*, one like a son of man *came with the clouds of heaven*, and came to the Ancient of Days, and they brought him near before him. And there was given him dominion and glory and a kingdom, that all people, nations, and languages should serve him : his domi-

nion is an everlasting kingdom which shall not pass away, and his kingdom that which shall not be destroyed." The reference is to a prediction of the universal kingdom of our Lord, at his coming, *over all nations*. It is the same to which our Lord himself referred before the High Priest—"Hereafter shall ye see the Son of man sitting on the right hand of power, and *coming in the clouds of heaven*." Matt. xxvi. 64. Comp. Acts i. 9-11, 1 Thess. iv. 17, Jude 14. Clouds, and especially the pillar of the cloud, was the general symbol of the Divine presence. Ps civ. 3. Isai. xix. 1. "Those clouds were anciently expounded by the Jews of the glorious attendance of the angels, waiting upon the Son of man: and in the same manner, with the same attendance, do we expect the coming of our Jesus." Pearson on the Creed, p. 293. That glorious coming is the very goal of this whole prophecy. iii. 11. xxii. 7, 12, 20. "And I beheld, and lo! a white cloud; and upon the cloud sat one like a son of man, having upon his head a golden crown, and in his hand a sharp sickle." xiv. 14. Comp. xix. 11-16. He refers also to another ancient prophecy.

(2.) *And every eye shall see him, and whoever have pierced him, and all the tribes of the earth shall bewail themselves because of him. He*

refers to Zec. xii. 10. "And I will pour upon the house of David, and upon the inhabitants of Jerusalem, the spirit of grace and of supplications; and they shall *look upon me whom they have pierced, and they shall mourn* for him, as one that is in bitterness for his first born." This prophecy is quoted as being fulfilled, so far as concerned his being pierced, at the first coming of our Lord. John xix. 34-37. It is here quoted again, as about to be completely fulfilled at his second coming. The reference is to a prediction of the penitential sorrow *of the Jews*, which shall take place at his second coming. See Zec. xii. 9; xiv. 5. If we find nothing explicit concerning this national penitence of the Jews in the subsequent visions of this prophecy, it is because the whole is addressed to the seven churches of Asia, as typical of the Universal Church, composed *meanwhile* of the Gentiles chiefly; but for that very reason, the concern which the Jews also shall have in the great day of his coming, was the more fitly pointed at so prominently in the introduction. Nevertheless, because these terms cannot be more comprehensive than they are—"whoever have pierced him," (in his person or in his members—comp. xi. 8, Acts ix. 5,) and "all the tribes of the earth." (See Gen. xxviii. 14. Ps. lxxi. 17. in Sept. and Heb.) Therefore we ought perhaps to infer that not the

Jews only, but whoever have pierced him of the Gentiles also—Jews and Gentiles shall repent together then. “The glory of the Lord shall be revealed, and all flesh shall see it together.” Isai. xl. 5. Heb. vi. 6. Finally, it is to be observed, that to both these very prophecies did our Lord himself refer, after the same concise manner, in his great prophetic discourse on the Mount of Olives. “And then shall appear the sign of the Son of man in heaven. And then shall *all the tribes of the earth mourn*, and they shall *see the Son of man coming in the clouds of heaven*, with power and great glory.” Matt. xxiv. 30. The second advent of our Lord having been thus stated by a reference to two ancient prophecies, is next confirmed by the divine affirmation.

2 *Yea, verily—I am the Alpha and the Omega, saith the Lord God, who is, and who was, and who is to come, the Almighty.* καὶ ἀμὲν is a strong affirmation, like καὶ ἔρχομαι ταχύ, “*Surely I come quickly.*” The Greek is repeated in Hebrew, says Grotius, because both Jews and Gentiles are interested in this truth. The Jews are accustomed to denote completeness, or perfection, by the phrase *from Aleph to Tau*, the first and last letters of the Hebrew alphabet, (Schöettgen in loc.) This was pro-

bably in use before the age of John, and borrowed from the prophetic style. "I am the first, and I am the last." Isai. xli. 4 ; xliv. 6 ; xlviii. 12. In the present instance (in which the first and last letters of the Greek alphabet are substituted) this expression of *completeness* or *perfection* evidently alludes to *duration*, as appears from its elucidating context ; "who is, and who was, and who is to come," and must, I conceive, be interpreted as denoting *the eternity of the Godhead*." (Mr. Gurney's Biblical Notes, p. 86.) This remark is supported by Isai. xliii. 10. In the Apocalypse either the expression "I am the Alpha and the Omega," or its corresponding phrase, "the first and the last," are in four distinct passages attributed to our Lord Jesus. l. 17 ; ii. 8 ; xxi. 6 ; xxii. 13. Yet, says Mr. Gurney, since the description, "who is, and who was, and who is to come," is the same as that by which, almost immediately before, the Father is characterized, and distinguished from the Spirit and the Son, it must I think be allowed (especially if Griesbach's text be taken for our guide) that these are the words of God, even the Father." Biblical Notes, p. 85, 86.

P A R T I.

Vision I.

THE INTRODUCTORY HIEROGLYPHIC.

- 9 Ἐγὼ Ἰωάννης, ὁ ἀδελφὸς ὑμῶν, καὶ συγκοινωνὸς ἐν τῇ θλίψει καὶ βασιλείᾳ καὶ ὑπομονῇ Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ, ἐγενόμην ἐν τῇ νήσῳ τῇ καλεσμένῃ Πάτμῳ, διὰ τὸν λόγον τοῦ Θεοῦ, καὶ διὰ τὴν μαρτυρίαν Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ.
- 10 Ἐγενόμην ἐν πνεύματι ἐν τῇ κυριακῇ ἡμέρᾳ· καὶ ἤκουσα ὀπισθῶ μου φωνὴν μεγάλην ὡς ἅλ-
- 11 πηγος, λεγούσης Ὁ βλέπεις γράψον εἰς βιβλίον, καὶ πέμψον ταῖς ἑπτὰ ἐκκλησίαις, εἰς Ἐφεσον, καὶ εἰς Σμύρναν, καὶ εἰς Πέργαμον, καὶ εἰς Θυάτειρα, καὶ εἰς Σάρδεις, καὶ εἰς
- 12 Φιλαδέλφειαν, καὶ εἰς Λαοδίκειαν. Καὶ ἐπέσρεψα βλέπειν τὴν φωνὴν ἣτις ἐλάλησε μετ' ἐμοῦ· καὶ ἐπιστρέψας εἶδον ἑπτὰ λυ-
- 13 χνίας χρυσοῦς, Καὶ ἐν μέσῳ τῶν ἑπτὰ λυ-

- χνιῶν ὅμοιον υἷϊ ἀνθρώπου, ἐνδεδυμένον ποδήρη,
 καὶ περιεζωσμένον πρὸς τοῖς μασηοῖς ζώνην
 14 χρυσῇν. Ἡ δὲ κεφαλὴ αὐτῆ καὶ αἱ τριχες,
 λευκαὶ ὡς ἔριον λευκόν, ὡς χιών· καὶ οἱ ὀφ-
 15 θαλμοὶ αὐτῆ ὡς φλόξ πυρός. Καὶ οἱ πόδες
 αὐτῆ ὅμοιοι χαλκολιβάνῳ, ὡς ἐν καμίνῳ
 πεπυρωμένοι, Καὶ ἡ φωνὴ αὐτῆ ὡς φωνὴ
 16 ὑδάτων πολλῶν. Καὶ ἔχων ἐν τῇ δεξιᾷ
 αὐτῆ χειρὶ ἀσέρας ἐπτὰ· καὶ ἐκτῆ στόματος
 αὐτῆ ρομφαία δίσομος ὀξεῖα ἐμπορευομένη·
 καὶ ἡ ὄψις αὐτῆ, ὡς ὁ ἥλιος φαίνει ἐν τῇ
 δυνάμει αὐτῆ.
 17 Καὶ ὅτε εἶδον αὐτόν, ἔπεσα πρὸς τὰς πόδας
 αὐτῆ ὡς νεκρός· καὶ ἔθηκε τὴν δεξιάν αὐτῆ
 ἐπ' ἐμέ, λέγων· μὴ φοβῆ· ἐγὼ εἰμι ὁ πρῶτος
 18 καὶ ὁ ἔσχατος, καὶ ὁ ζῶν· καὶ ἐγενόμην
 νεκρός, καὶ ἰδὲ ζῶν εἰμι εἰς τὰς αἰώ-
 νας τῶν αἰώνων· καὶ ἔχω τὰς κλεῖς τῆ
 19 θανάτου καὶ τῆ αἰῶνος. Γράψον ὃν ἄ εἶδες
 (καὶ ἃ εἰσι, καὶ ἃ μέλλει γίνεσθαι μετὰ
 ταῦτα) τὸ μυσῆριον τῶν ἐπτὰ ἀσερων ὧν
 20 εἶδες ἐπὶ τῆς δεξιᾶς μου, καὶ τὰς ἐπτὰ

λυχνίας τὰς χρυσᾶς. Ὁι ἐπτά ἀσέρες, ἄγγε-
λοι τῶν ἐπτά ἐκκλησιῶν εἰσι· καὶ αἱ λυχνίαι
αἱ ἐπτά, ἐπτά ἐκκλησίαι εἰσι.

- I.—9. *I John, your brother, and companion in the affliction and kingdom and expectation of Jesus Christ, was in the island called Patmos, for the word of God and for the testimony of Jesus Christ.*
10. *I was in the Spirit on the Lord's day ; and I heard behind me a loud voice, as of a trumpet,*
11. *Saying ; What thou seest write in a book, and send to the seven churches ; to Ephesus, and to Smyrna, and to Pergamos, and to Thyatira, and to Sardis, and to Philadelphia, and to*
12. *Laodicea.—And I turned about to see the voice which spake with me ; and upon turning I*
13. *saw seven golden lamp-stands ; And in the midst of the lamp-stands, one like a son of man, robed down to the foot, and girt about the*

V. 9. *Expectation.*—This is Beza's rendering. Comp. 2 Thess. iii. 5. εἰς τὴν ὑπομονὴν τοῦ Χριστοῦ. The patient expectation of Christ's coming. Schleusner, Num. 4, gives examples from the Sept. of ὑπομονή used in this sense. In other places of this book, *patience* is undoubtedly the proper rendering, ii. 2, 3, 19. xiii. 10. xiv. 12. In one passage it appears to partake of both senses, iii. 10.

V. 13. *One like a Son of Man.*—Wakefield has rendered it "one like a man." It is the usual Hebrew and Syriac idiom to express a *human being*. "The Syrians cannot express the word *man* otherwise than by *son of man* : accordingly, 1 Cor. xv. 45, Adam, in the Syriac version, is called *the first son of man*, though no mortal was his father." Michaelis Anmerk. in loc. It occurs frequently in the O. T. See especially Ps. viii. 5, Is. lii. 14, Dan. vii. 13 (where the Sept. omits the article), and Comp. Dan. x. 16, Ezek. i. 26.

14. *breasts with a golden girdle. His head and his hair were white as wool, as white as snow ;*
15. *and his eyes as a flame of fire. And his feet were like smelting brass, as though they were burnt bright in a furnace. And his voice was*
16. *as the voice of many waters. And he had in his right hand seven stars ; and out of his mouth went a sharp two-edged weapon : and his countenance was as the sun shining in his strength.*
- 17 *And when I saw him, I fell at his feet as dead ; and he laid his right hand upon me, saying,*

V. 15. *Smelting brass.*—After all that has been written by Bochart and so many others on the word *χαλκολίβανον*, it will be sufficient to refer to Schleusner's short article upon it ; “where it will appear that the most learned interpreters assign this meaning to it, which corresponds exactly with the resplendent brightness of the object seen in this vision. This is expressed in Ezek. xl. 3, Dan. x. 6, by ὡσεὶ ὄρασις χαλκῷ στίλβοντος. And πεπυρωμένοι, though in the present tense, does not seem to express *burned*, that is, the fire being extinct, but having been in the act of burning so long as to have obtained a great degree of brightness.”—D. Woodhouse.

V. 16. *A sharp two-edged weapon.*—Hesych. *ρομφαία*. Θράκιον ἀμυντήριον, μάκαιρα, ξίφος ἢ ἀκοντίον μακρόν. I render it *weapon* not merely on account of its particular shape, but especially because I believe the word to be always reserved, in this book, to signify the same weapon as distinct from others. It is evidently the same ii. 12, 16. xix. 15, 21. I believe there is an allusion to it even in vi. 8. The sword of *man*, in this book, is *μαχαίρα* xiii. 10. In all the N. T. *ρομφαία* is used only once besides, where it implies a spiritual effect. Luke ii. 35. Valckenaer Select. D. p. 82, and in Heb. iv. 12, suspects ὀξεῖα here, and ii. 12, xix. 15, to be only a gloss for *δίσκομος*. But surely it is plain that both here and in the Ep. to the Heb. *δίσκομος* describes the *shape* of the weapon, and consequently the epithet ὀξεῖα is not redundant. No argument can be derived from *δίσκομος* as though it were a mere Hebraism for *very sharp* since it is also a classic term. Πρὸς ἡπάς ὄσαι

18. *Fear not ; I am the first and the last, And he who liveth ; and I was dead, but behold, I am alive for ever and ever, and have the keys of*
 19. *death and of Hell.—Write therefore what thou sawest ; (namely things which are, and which are about to come to pass hereafter,)*

δίσοικον ζῆρος τῶδε. Eur. Helen. v. 989. See Pfochen. de ling. Gr. N. T. puritate. § 116.

V. 18. *The keys of death and of hell.*—In the early forms of our language hell was written *hele*, being derived from the Saxon *helan*, to cover, and answers exactly to the *sheol* of the Hebrews and the *hades* of the Greeks. It is the general receptacle of the dead, the place of departed souls, whatever it may be whether happy or miserable. See Grotius, Matt. xvi. 18. Luke xvi. 23. xxiii. 48, and Schleusner or Parkhurst 'Αδης.'—D. Woodhouse.

V. 19. *Write therefore what thou sawest (namely, things which are, and which are about to come to pass hereafter)*—Hammond's note upon this passage appears to be more than usually confused, and his remark, that in order to admit Brightman's exposition the phrase ought to have been *καὶ εἰσι καὶ μέλλει γίνεσθαι* (as if the style of the Apocalypse had been pure Greek, whereas it is almost pure Hebrew) appears also to be hypercritical.

It is very familiar to the reader of the Gr. Test. that καὶ like the Heb. ו is used for most of the different kinds of conjunctions. It is sometimes used for *namely*, when something preceding is either to be repeated or more clearly explained. One example will be sufficient. Καὶ ἐπιβέβηκως ἐπὶ ὄνον, καὶ (namely) πῶλον νίδν ὑποζυγίς Matt. xxi. 5. Comp. Heb. and Sept. Zec. ix. 9. It is true that two animals were brought to our Lord, but John gives us the *additional* information that it was *the colt* upon which he rode ; and he also interprets for us the language of the prophecy. Ὁ βασιλεύς σου ἔρχεται, καθήμενος ἐπὶ πῶλον ὄνου. John xii. 5.

The question in all language, and especially in the language of prophecy, is, not what is the *obvious* but what is the *intended* meaning of every word. That καὶ admits of being rendered *namely* is undeniable ; that it *requires* it all the arguments for the prophetic sense of the epistles to the seven churches appear to me to be sufficient evidence. The whole sentence intimates a command to write down the meaning of the hieroglyphic which he had *just seen*, *καὶ εἰδὼς what thou sawest* ; not, as before, *ὁ βλέπεις, what thou*

20. *The mystery of the seven stars which thou sawest upon my right hand, and the seven golden lamp-stands. The seven stars are angels of the seven churches ; and those seven lamp-stands are seven churches.*

COMMENT.

This opening of the prophecy consists of three parts, the scene of the Vision—the hieroglyphic—and the key to it.

I. *The scene of the Vision.* v. 9.

I John, your brother, and companion in the affliction and kingdom and expectation of Jesus Christ, was in the island called Patmos, for the word of God and for the testimony of Jesus Christ.—The humble apostle describes himself no otherwise than as a brother, who partakes with them of the present trials, and of those future glories of the kingdom which they earnestly expect. For that hope, and for the declaration of it, he was in exile (Comp. vi. 9.)

shalt see, which command related to *all* the visions of the Apocalypse. The clause is parenthetical, and intimates that the hieroglyphic which he had just seen was symbolic of things *both present and future*. A subsequent hieroglyphic is prefaced by stating that it should be symbolic of things *future only*. iv. 1.

I have the more deliberately weighed this passage, since my attention has been particularly pointed to it by a kind communication with which I have been favored by Mr. Faber.

V. 20. *Upon my right hand*—ἐπὶ τῇς δεξιᾶς μου corresponds entirely with ἐν τῇ δεξιᾷ αὐτοῦ. v. 16. Ἐπὶ with a genitive or dative signifying position and rest no less than ἐν.

in Patmos, now Palmosa, one of the Sporades ; an island about thirty miles in circumference, and distant about forty from the continent. So Daniel was in exile when the spirit of prophecy was poured upon him.

II. *The Hieroglyphic*, v. 10-16.

I was in the Spirit on the Lord's day. Comp. iv. 2 ; xvii. 3 ; xxi. 10. The weight of argument, though it is not worth while to state it here, is almost without counter-balance on the side of John's having seen all the visions of this prophecy in one day. Hammond, Eichhorn, and others, insist that the *Lord's day* means here, the *anniversary* of our Lord's resurrection ; on which day the ancient Christians were accustomed to sit up till midnight, because it was at the Passover they expected the Lord's return. (Jerom in Matt. xxiv. Chrysost. in Ps. cxix. Suicer on κυριακή). Daniel was prepared by acts of devotion to receive the prophetic Spirit (Dan. ix. 1-5, 21.) And after like preparation did the prophetic Spirit, though on that ragged rock, *entrance* the beloved disciple ; as of old the prophets, and in his own day his brethren the apostles. Ezek. iii. 12-14 ; Matt. xxii. 43 ;

Acts x. 10 ; 2 Cor. xii. 2-4. He proceeds to relate—1, what he heard ; 2, what he saw.

1. *And I heard behind me a loud voice as of a trumpet, saying, What thou seest write in a book, and send to the seven churches ; to Ephesus, and to Smyrna, and to Pergamos, and to Thyatira, and to Sardis, and to Philadelphia, and to Laodicea.* The voice he heard was more than human. “ Et audita major humana vox, excedere Deos.” Tac. H. v. 32. *The trumpet* accompanied the voice of God at the awful promulgation of the divine law on Mount Sinai, (Exod. xix. 16) and shall again at its execution on the Mount of Olives. 1 Thess. iv. 16 ; 1 Cor. xv. 52 ; Zec. xiv. 4. The old prophets were expressly commanded to *write* their prophecies, thereby both to publish and to perpetuate them. Is. xxx. 8 ; Jer. xxx. 2 ; Hab. ii. 2. The present command to write extends to *all* that he should see, not to the present vision only. Accordingly John, in his introduction, addressed the *whole book* to the seven churches in Asia. v. 4. These seven churches are here enumerated precisely in the order in which a messenger would go round to them all from Patmos. Daubuz has observed that if you reckon Israel and Judah for one people, which they are, the prophet Amos was in a similar manner directed to open his

commission by addressing a prophecy severally to seven neighbouring nations.—John proceeds to relate what he saw.

2. And I turned about to see the voice which spake with me, and upon turning I saw :

(1.) *Seven golden lamp-stands.* The *tabernacle* had no light but what proceeded from a golden lamp-stand, consisting of a shaft and six branches, bearing seven lamps; which Moses was commanded to make after a pattern which had been shewn him. Exod xxv. 31-40. For the *temple*, Solomon “made ten lamp-stands of gold according to their form.” 2 Chron. iv. 7; 1 Chron. xxviii. 12, 19; 1 Kings vii. 49. It should seem that this number was reduced again to seven after the second temple. “From some passages in Josephus it will appear (Ant. Jud. iii. c. 6, § 7; viii. c. 4, § 1; Bell. Jud. v. c. 5, § 5; vii. c. 5, § 5), that the lamp-stands of the temple were seven, each distinct from the other; but that the Romans, when they took possession of them, new modelled them, forming them into one (according to their original pattern) to grace the triumphant entry of Vespasian. The representation of it is still to be seen on the arch of Titus.” (D. Woodhouse.) Since the apostle therefore saw a vision of seven

golden lamp-stands, this implies that he saw in vision the *interior* of the temple of God (as Ezekiel did the inner court. Ezek. xliii. 5-7) for the golden lamp-stand was placed just before the veil. Exod. xl. 22-25.

(2.) *And in the midst of the seven lamp-stands, one like a son of man.*—Comp. xiv. 14. The description which follows strongly resembles two passages in Daniel, which it will be convenient therefore to quote. “I beheld till the thrones were cast down, and the Ancient of Days did sit, whose garment was white as snow, and the hair of his head like the pure wool. I saw in the night visions, and behold one like a son of man came with the clouds of heaven, and came to the Ancient of Days, and they brought him near before him; and there was given him dominion, glory, and a kingdom.” Dan vii. 9, 13, 14. “In which vision, it has been justly remarked, the Messiah is described as *like a son of man*, to convey the idea that his character and government would not be like those of the worldly monarchies which had been represented by *savage animals*, but gentle and humane, as of a man with men.” (Schotten de appell. τῷ υἱῷ τῷ Ἀνθρ, p. 18). The second passage is this: “Behold a certain man clothed in linen, whose loins were girded with fine gold of Uphaz. His body

also was like the beryl, and his face as the appearance of lightning, and his eyes as lamps of fire, and his arms and his feet like in color to polished brass, and the voice of his words like the voice of a multitude." Dan. x. 5, 6, 16. It should be again remarked by the way, that although in the Apocalypse our Lord is described as *a son of man* with reference to his incarnation (Phil. ii. 7), and as *a lamb*, v. 8, with reference to his passion, yet is he also styled *the Son of God*, ii. 18, with reference to his divinity; and indeed what a son of man he is, himself declares almost immediately, v. 18, "I am the first and the last, and he who liveth." How much the vision which John saw resembled those of Daniel will be manifest from comparing the above quotations with the following description [1] of his vesture, and [2] of his person.

[1.] *Robed down to the foot, and girt about the breasts with a golden girdle.*—The person here described is a high priest. Heb. iv. 15. One part of the high priest's garment was, "the robe of the ephod all of blue." Exod. xxviii. 31-35. The *blue color* is marked by Daniel—"his body was like the beryl." Dan. x. 5. *The length of the robe* is marked here; for the very word used here *ποδήρη* is used also in Exod. xxviii. Zec. iii. 5. Sept. speaking of the robe of the ephod. *The*

girdle also of the ephod (Sept. ζώνη) was “embroidered of gold, blue and purple and scarlet and fine twined linen.” Exod. xxviii. 4. 8. To the ministry of the high priest it pertained “to cause the lamps to burn continually.” Lev. xxiv. 1-4. “The feasts of the Jews,” says Sir I. Newton, “were typical of things to come. The Passover related to the first coming of Christ, and the feasts of the seventh month to his second coming. His first coming being over before the giving of this prophecy, the feasts of the seventh month only are here alluded to. On the first day of that month, in the morning, the high priest dressed the lamps.”

[2.] He proceeds to describe his person in seven particulars.

His head and his hair were white as wool, as white as snow.—Comp. Dan. vii. 9. Why the characteristic features of the *Ancient of Days* are here combined with those of the *Son of Man* may more conveniently be discussed at a subsequent period of the prophecy. (Meanwhile see Dr. J. P. Smith's Scripture Testimony of the Messiah, Bk. ii. c. 4, § 26.) Here it may be sufficient to add, that by these expressions nothing more seems to be intended than the majestic

brightness especially of his head and face.
(Hesych. λευκὸν, λαμπρὸν.)

And his eyes as a flame of fire.—Comp. Dan. x. 6. Who the person is that is thus described is placed out of doubt by these words being repeated in the epistle to the church at Thyatira, in which he is called plainly “the Son of God.” ii. 18. These are the symbols of his *omniscience*, as there also it is added; “And all the churches shall know, that I am he that searcheth the reins and hearts.” ii. 23. Heb. iv. 13. When he comes to destroy his enemies those eyes are not omitted. xix. 12. They withered the Egyptian host. Exod. xiv. 24.

And his feet were like smelting brass, as though they were burnt bright in a furnace.—Comp. Dan. x. 6. The bright appearance is not all that is intended; for brass is an emblem of strength, and here of omnipotence, “to tread down the wicked in their place.” Job. vi. 12. Deut. xxxiii. 24, 25. Mic. iv. 13. Comp. Deut. xxv. 4.

And his voice was as the voice of many waters. Comp. Dan. x. 6. It is even more literally like. Ezek. xliiii. 2. “Behold, the glory of the God of Israel came from the way of the East; his

voice was like a noise of many waters ; and the earth shined with his glory." Comp. Ezek. i. 24. The figure of *waters* is explained by a *multitude*. xix, 6. Comp. xiv. 2. xvii. 5.—"Christ is here represented in union with his church." Dr. H. More.

And he had in his right hand seven stars.—Vitringa thinks that the seven stars were painted as symbols in the open palm of his right hand. They are represented, says Grotius, as the signets on the right hand of the high priest. "Gemmæ nitidos vertuntur in ignes." Ovid. Met. viii. Jer. xvii. 24. Hag. ii. 23. The idea seems to be, that as the high priest extended his right hand to trim the lamps, their lights appeared like stars on his hand.

And out of his mouth went a sharp two-edged weapon.—In the vision of Daniel this is omitted. To Joshua he appeared with his sword drawn in his hand. Josh. v. 13, 14. I do not refer to Isai. xl. 4. because Honbigant *conjectures* that the reading should be, "with the *blast* of his mouth;" which Bp. Louth thinks probable, since it is confirmed by the Sept. and the Chaldee paraphrast. But this is a plain reference to Isai. xlix. 2. "And he hath made my mouth like a sharp sword." Comp. Heb. iv. 12. This

clause is merely repeated in the epistle to Pergamos, ii, 12 ; but the use which in that epistle he threatens to make of it is against his enemies, the Nicolaitans ; “ I will wage war with them with the weapon of my mouth.” ii. 14—16. Again, when he actually appears “ in righteousness to judge and make war,” he comes with that weapon, “ that with it he might smite the nations ;” and immediately afterwards it follows, “ And the rest were slain with the weapon of him that sat upon the horse, and which proceeded out of his mouth—and *all the fowls were glutted with their flesh.*” xix. 11. 15. 21. All this obviously implies *the execution of judgments threatened.* If this needs confirmation, let the following passage be considered. “ Therefore have I hewed them by the prophets ; I have slain them by the words of my mouth : and thy judgments are as the light that goeth forth.” Hos. vi. 5. The sense of which appears to be correctly given by the Chaldee paraphrast : “ therefore because I warned them by the message of my prophets, and they repented not, I will bring upon them slayers—and the justice of it shall be as clear as the light of the sun. (Pocock in loc.) But it is still more appropriate to observe, that in the very prophecy to which the text points, after it had been said, “ He hath made my mouth like a sharp sword,” it follows ;

“And I will feed them that oppress thee with their own flesh ; and they shall be drunken with their own blood, as with new wine.” Isai. xlix. 26. Comp. lxvi. 16. Ps. cxlix. 6.

And his countenance was as the sun shining in his strength. At noon, and at the summer solstice, when no eye may look upon him. Judg. v. 31. The type of this glory was shewn in Moses. Exod. xxxiv. 29-35. The prophecy of it in Mal. iv. 2. The outward fact was seen in the transfiguration ; Matt. xvii. 2. The inward mystery is, “the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ.” Heb. i. 2. 2 Cor. iv. 6 ; comp. Rev. x. i.

III. *The Key to the Hieroglyphic.* v. 17-20.

He proceeds to relate—1. The effect which the vision produced on him ; and 2. Our Lord’s farther address.

1. *And when I saw him I fell at his feet as dead.* Similar effects of the glory of the Lord upon the frailty of man have been common, whether in fact, Matt. xvii. 2-6. Acts ix. 4, or in vision. Ezek. i. 28. Dan. viii. 18 ; x. 17-19.

2. Terror similar to that of Daniel is accom-

panied by similar consolation; for (1) he received comfort, and then (2) a command.

(1) *And he laid his right hand upon me, saying, Fear not.* Thus a hand touched Daniel. Dan. viii. 18. x. 10; the emblem of divine assistance; 1 Kings, xviii. 46. Yet not by gesture only, by voice also he supports his servant.

[1] *I am the first and the last, and he who liveth.* Καὶ ὁ ζῶν. He is God, "the living one." He assumes here the attributes of "the Lord God, the Almighty." (See Comment, v. 8.) When God would console, he reminds us of his eternal existence to fulfil all his promises.

[2] *And I was dead, but behold I am alive for ever and ever, and have the keys of death and of hell.* He is man, but with all power committed unto him in heaven, on earth, and under the earth. Matt. xxviii. 18. Ph. ii. 9-10. The *keys of death* are the keys of the grave. Ps. ix. 13. The *keys of hell* are the keys of the place of departed spirits. Hos. xiii. 14, quoted 1 Cor. xv. 55. He that has power over both, to lock up or to let out both body and soul, has the full power of life and death. "Unto God the Lord belong the issues from death." Ps. xlviii. 20. The whole passage plainly refers to another

equally sublime. "See now that I, even I am He, and there is no God with me: *I kill and I make alive*; I wound and I heal: neither is there any that can deliver out of my hand. For I lift up my hand to heaven, and say, *I live for ever.*" Deut. xxxii. 39-40; comp. Jo. v. 21-26. The apostle having been thus supported and consoled;

2.) He receives a command [1] To write what he had seen, and especially [2] The explanation of it.

[1.] *Write therefore what thou sawest (namely, things which are, and which are about to come to pass hereafter), the mystery of the seven stars which thou sawest upon my right hand, and the seven golden lamp-stands.*—The vision, it should seem, was gone, and the voice only remained. What he saw was symbolical of things both present and future *as to time* (see the note), and *what they signified* he adds.

[2.] *The seven stars are angels of the seven churches; and those seven lamp-stands are seven churches.*—Not only the prophet but the priest was, "the messenger of the Lord of Hosts." Hag. i. 23, Mal. ii. 7. But these stars are called the angels, or messengers, of the churches.

Vitringa is of opinion, that the head presbyter of the church is called the angel of God to the church, with allusion to *the delegate of the church* in the synagogue. (Vitr. de Vet. Syn. iii. p. 2, c. 2, 3). Sir I. Newton, perhaps more correctly, refers the matter higher up. "The seven angels answer to the seven *Amarc-holim*, who were priests and chief officers of the temple, and had jointly the keys of the gates of the temple, with those of the treasures, and the direction, appointment, and oversight of all things in the temple."

The command proceeds, directing the apostle to write to each of the seven churches in particular. But before we proceed, the following apposite remarks of Daubuz may be introduced. "Is not the decoration of a theatre, and its scenery, as necessary to the full representation of the action, as even the description of it in the words by the actors? And does not the *decoration* often supply what the poet would be unable to express without a profusion of words? So these *apparatus* (the introductory hieroglyphics) to the Apocalyptical visions are not useless decorations, but serve as prologues to the drama, and explain, by way of introduction, *the subject of the whole action*." (Daubuz Prelim. Dis. Num. 68). To apply this to the present instance.

The golden lamp-stand (attended in this hieroglyphic by the great high priest) was placed in the *interior* of the temple, just before the veil. The light of the church relates to its *spiritual* condition. Dan. xii. 3, John v. 35, Matt. v. 15, 16. And the following epistles relate, not so much to the external circumstances as to the spiritual condition, both of the seven churches of Asia, and of the Holy Catholic Church itself.

THE SEVEN EPISTLES.

THE EPISTLE TO EPHESUS.

- 1 Τῷ ἀγγέλῳ τῆς ἐν Εφέσῳ ἐκκλησίας γράψον.
τάδε λέγει ὁ κρατῶν τὰς ἑπτὰ ἀσέρας ἐν τῇ
δεξιᾷ αὐτοῦ, ὁ περιπατῶν ἐν μέσῳ τῶν ἑπτὰ
λυχνιῶν τῶν χρυσῶν.
- 2 Οἶδα τὰ ἔργα σου, καὶ τὸν κόπον σου καὶ τὴν
ὑπομονήν σου, καὶ ὅτι οὐ δύνη βασιλέσαι κακῶς·
καὶ ἐπείρασας τὰς λέγοντας ἑαυτὰς ἀπο-
στολὰς εἶναι, καὶ οὐκ εἰσὶ· καὶ εὗρες αὐτὰς
- 3 ψευδεῖς· Καὶ ὑπομονὴν ἔχεις καὶ ἐβάσασας
- 4 διὰ τὸ ὄνομα μου, καὶ οὐκ ἐκοπίσας. Ἀλλ'
ἔχω κατὰ σου, ὅτι τὴν ἀγάπην σου τὴν πρώτην
- 5 ἀφῆκας. Μνημόνευε ὅν ποθεν πέπτωκας, καὶ
μετανόησον, καὶ τὰ πρῶτα ἔργα ποιήσον· εἰ
δὲ μὴ, ἔρχομα ἰσοὶ ταχὺ, καὶ κινήσω τὴν
λυχνίαν σου ἐκ τοῦ τόπου αὐτῆς, ἐὰν μὴ μετα-
- 6 νοήσης. Ἀλλὰ τῷτο ἔχεις, ὅτι μισεῖς τὰ
ἔργα τῶν Νικολαιτῶν, αἱ καὶ γὰρ μισῶ.

7 Ὁ ἔχων οὖς, ἀκροάσω, τί τὸ πνεῦμα λέγει
ταῖς ἐκκλησίαις. τῷ νικῶντι δώσω αὐτῷ φα-
γεῖν ἐκ τῆς ζύτης τῆς ζωῆς, ὃ ἐστὶν ἐν τῷ
παραδείσῳ τῆς Θεοῦ μῆ.

- II.—1. *To the angel of the church at Ephesus, write ;
Thus saith he who holdeth the seven stars in his
right hand ; who walketh about in the midst of
the seven golden lamp-stands.*
2. *I know thy works, and thy labour, and thy pa-
tience ; and that thou canst not endure the wicked.
And thou hast tried them who call themselves
Apostles, and are not, and hast found them false.*
3. *And thou hast patience, and has endured on
account of my name, and hast not fainted under*
4. *thy labor. But I have against thee, that thou*
5. *hast left thy first love. Remember therefore
whence thou art fallen, and repent, and do thy
first works ; or else I will come to thee quickly,
and will remove thy lamp-stand out of its place,*

V. 1. *Who holdeth.*—Vitrina observes that ὁ κρατῶν, in the sense of protection, differs not much from ἔχων, i. 16. Ἐχων is sometimes used for retaining, or holding. Ἐχωμεν χάριν, Heb. xii. 28. Add Rev. ii. 24.

V. 4. *Thou hast not fainted under thy labor.*—It is difficult to give the elegant turn with which, in the original, the terms are opposed to each other. Οὐ δύνη βαρύναι and ἐβάρυνας. Οἶδα τὸν κόπον σου and ἐκ ἐκοπίσας. Thou canst not endure the wicked, but thou hast endured on my account : thou hast labored, and not fainted under thy labor.

Thou hast left thy first love.—I am tempted to leave our common English version, although it would perhaps be more correctly rendered, *Thou hast remitted of thy former love.*

6. *unless thou repent. But this thou hast, that thou hatest the deeds of the Nicolaitans, which I also hate.*
7. *He that hath an ear, let him hear what the spirit saith to the churches.—To him that overcometh, I will give him to eat of the tree of life, which is in the paradise of my God.*

COMMENT.

Each Epistle consists of three parts—a Proem, the Argument, and an Epilogue.

I. *The Proem*, v. 1.

1. *To the angel of the church at Ephesus, write.*—Whether the angel be understood of the leading presbyter of the church at Ephesus or of the whole body of the ministry, he is addressed as the representative of the whole body of that church, not only officially but morally ; since

V. 7. *The tree of life.*—In the Greek writers ξύλον generally signifies dressed timber, not a tree.—This is however not *always* the case, since it is used, as here, by Theophrastus, Aristotle, and Eurip. Cyclop. v. 596. (See Schleuner, ad. v. Wolf. Cur. Phil. Rev. xxii. 2.) And comp. Hor. Od. ii. 13, “triste lignum.” John no doubt borrowed the use of it, in this sense, from the Alexandrian version. Gen. i. 29 ; ii. 29. I am indebted to my learned neighbour, the Rev. Thos. Kidd, of Norwich, for pointing out to me, that Callimachus with as little doubt borrowed the same use of it from the same source ; since he was librarian to Ptolemy Philadelphus when that version was finished, and has drawn for his own use from the Psalms pretty copiously, as well as from other parts.

^α Ησθετο Δαμάτηρ ὅτι οἱ ξύλον ἱερὸν ἀλγεί.

Callin. H. in Cer v. 41.

the state of the spiritual flock generally corresponds, as a body, with that of the pastor. That the whole church is addressed, through the person of their officer, is obvious from the contents of the epistles. See especially i. 5. where the threat is, not that the angel shall be removed, but that the lamp-stand (or church) shall be removed out of its place. See also ii. 10-24. Add, that the individuals belonging to each church are plainly addressed in the epilogue to each epistle. See ii. 7, 11, 17; iii. 6, 13, 22. Ephesus was near the coast of the Gulf of Scala Nova, and of all the seven cities was situated the nearest to Patmos, and so was naturally addressed in the first place. The church also at Ephesus was the most eminent of all the Asiatic churches, having enjoyed the ministry successively of Apollos, Paul, Timothy, and John himself, who resided there. But it was addressed in the first place, chiefly because, by the all-ruling providence of God, it was to be a type of the Holy Catholic Church of *the first Apocalyptic period*; that is, from the Apostolic age to the reign of Decius, A.D. 250.

2. *Thus saith he who holdeth the seven stars in his right hand; who walketh about in the midst of the seven golden lamp-stands.* So God was said to walk in the camp of Israel; and for the

literal meaning of the symbol see Matt. xviii. 20 ; xxviii. 20 ; Lev. xxvi. 12. Whether this portion of the preceding description i. 13, 16, be selected, as some have thought, with any allusion to the boast of Ephesus, that she was *the light of Asia*, (Chrysost. in Arg. Ep. ad Ephes.) may be questioned, but it is certainly most appropriate to the argument of this epistle. He whose protection and love are signified by holding the stars in his right hand, has reason to complain of any remission of their former love, v. 4. And he whose supervision is marked by his walking about in the midst of the seven golden lamp-stands, has right to threaten that he will remove this out of its place, unless they repent, v. 5.

II. *The Argument.* v. 2-6.

1. He accurately defines their character, and begins with commendation.

(1) *I know thy works, and thy labor, and thy patience ; and that thou canst not endure the wicked. And thou hast tried them who call themselves apostles, and are not, and hast found them false. And thou hast patience, and hast endured on account of my name, and hast not fainted under thy labor. This is great praise. After an assertion of his omniscience, Heb. iv.*

13, common to all the epistles, *I know thy works*. 9, 13, 9 ; iii. 1, 8, 15 ; the enumeration itself of those works was their praise. Their labor in propagating the gospel, their patience in enduring persecution, with quiet expectation of their Lord's return. i. 9 ; 1. Thess. i. 3. Luke viii. 15 ; their separation from wicked men, as Paul had so long before exhorted them. Eph. v. 11 ; and especially from false apostles, against whom that faithful man had also so repeatedly warned them. (Acts xx. 29-30 ; 1 Tim. iv. 1-6. Comp. 2. Tim. iii. 1-5 ; 1 Tim. iv. 14. Comp. 2 Tim. i. 6-7 ; 1 Tim. vi. 4. Comp. 2 Tim. ii. 16 ; 1 Tim. vi. 13, 14. Comp. 2 Tim. iv. 1-5 ; 1 Tim. vi. 20. Comp. 2 Tim. ii. 14 ; Eph. iv. 14 ; 1 Jo. iv. i.) These things were so exemplary, that our Lord studiously repeats them, in the last sentence. *For the Church of Ephesus*, this character corresponds with every thing known of it from other sources. In the time of Paul their conduct was exemplary ; for as it is remarked in the epistle of Ignatius to the Ephesians, Paul in his whole epistle mentions them only with praise. And that their character was a *tried* one is obvious, since Paul calls his own conflict at Ephesus, one rather with beasts than with men. 1 Cor. xv. 32. Acts xix. 32. That both in the time of Paul and afterwards, *false apostles*, in the larger

sense of that term, infested Ephesus, is matter of history. It was full of rhetoricians and philosophers, called Gnostics, *ψευδώνυμοι γνώστες*. (1 Tim. vi. 20. Life of Apollon. Tyan. viii. 7.) Apollonius in the reign of Domitian, and Cerinthus both dwelt there. (Euseb. H. E. iii. 23, 28. Conf. Iren. i. 9.) Ephesus indeed was infested by the Gnostics, but the Church of Christ at Ephesus was not infected by them. Ignatius, in an epistle addressed to them soon after the date of the Apocalypse, speaks of pretended Christians having been among them, but adds, that they had not listened to them ; “no heresy dwells in you.” Whether this commendation be due to the *Holy Catholic Church* of the first Apocalyptic period (or from the days of the apostles to the reign of Decius) can as little be doubted. The acts of the apostles, and their epistles, sufficiently assure us both of its active and passive graces, at the date of those writings ; of their mutual love, and of their patience under persecution, at first from the Jews, and afterwards from the Heathen, both at Rome and in the provinces. We have every reason to believe the same of the Universal Church during the persecutions under Trajan, and the other Emperors till within a *few* years of Decius. Not only the popularity, but the very design of Milner’s Ecclesiastical History renders it a very

unexceptionable testimony. In his review of the heresies of *the second century*, Milner writes: "It has often been said, that many have been enlisted among heretics who were really Christians. When I shall see a proof of this I shall take notice of it. But of the heretics of the second century, I fear that in general no such favorable judgment ought to be passed. The state of Christian affairs, in truth, was such as to afford no probable reason for any really good men to dissent. Where was there more of piety and virtue to be found than among the general society of Christians? And how could any persons be more exposed to the cross than they were? (Vol. i. p. 256.) As to *false apostles* and their influence upon the Church at large *during the apostle age* it amounted to little. "The doctrines of the Gnostics (as we might expect from their founder, Simon Magnus) appear to have been earlier known in Asia Minor than in Europe; and for some reason, with which we are not acquainted, to have taken deep root *in the neighbourhood of Ephesus*." (Dr. Burton on the Heresies of the Apostolic Age, p. 162). It appears from these epistles, that in Pergamos and Thyatira they had already succeeded in seducing some of the disciples. But these were only exceptions. Dodwell has shewn (Dissert in Iren. i. § 15, 16) that they lurked

indeed among the Christians before, but that they did not shew themselves in force *till the time of Trajan, and then they became a separate body*. Our Lord having awarded them this praise, adds his reprehension ;

(2.) *But I have against thee that thou hast left thy first love.* For the phrase, see Jer. ii. 2. As to the matter of the reproach, the epistle itself is sufficient evidence that *the Church at Ephesus* deserved it. It was no less applicable to *the Holy Catholic Church, first and in some degree, at the latter part of the apostolic age, but chiefly for a short period before the persecution in the reign of Decius*. It should seem that there was a partial remission of her first love from the reign of Nero to that of Trajan. During that interval of about thirty years, it appears indirectly from the testimony of Lactantius and Celsus (Lact. de mort. pers. c. 3, Origen contr. Cels. lib iii. p. 117), from the silence of Eusebius as to any memorable Christian acts ; and from the absence of any Christian writings, with the exception of the epistle of Clement of Rome to the Corinthians. So far as Asia Minor is concerned we have the more direct testimony of Clement of Alexandria. (See three dissert. on this subject, Vitring. Obs. Sacr. lib. iv.) This declension however and the proof of it are both

of a negative character ; but something more positive *began* to be apparent *toward the close of the second century*. Milner, speaking of the controversy respecting Easter, which formerly had been amicably adjusted between Polycarp of Smyrna and Anicetus of Rome, but which had been unhappily revived toward the close of this century, writes thus : “ That a reconciliation should have been effected with so much difficulty, and that so slight a subject should have appeared of so great moment at this time, seems no small proof, *that the power of true godliness had suffered some declension ; and was an omen toward the close of this century (the second) of the decay of the happy effects of the first great effusion of the spirit*, (Ecc. Hist. vol. 1, p. 259.) Speaking also of the effect of human philosophy upon the Church, during the same period, he says, “ We have hitherto found it no hard matter to discover, in the teachers and writers of Christianity, the vital doctrines of Christ. We shall now perceive that the most precious truths of the Gospel began to be less attended to and less brought into view.” (Vol. 1. p. 265—268.) “ *It deserves, he adds a little lower down, to be remarked, that the first grand and general declension, after the primary effusion of the Divine Spirit, should be fixed about the middle of this century*”—THE THIRD. (Ecc. His. vol. 1. p. 336.)

2. Having defined the character of this church, he admonishes them.

(1.) *Remember therefore whence thou art fallen, and repent, and do thy first works; or else I will come to thee quickly, and will remove thy lamp-stand out of its place, unless thou repent.*—Unless they do their first works, (the only proof of repentance, Matt. iii. 8.) he threatens to un-church them. The lamp of God, its only light, could not have been removed from the temple without abolishing the Levitical service. But the condition of repentance is here twice reserved. There should be time for repentance, and repentance should avert the evil.—Now, first with regard to *the Church at Ephesus*, it appears that they did repent. Ignatius writing to them, after the date of the Apocalypse, acknowledges that they were wholly devoted to God, that they loved only God; and expresses his ardent desire to be found at last in the lot of the Christians at Ephesus. Accordingly the lamp-stand was not removed: the Church at Ephesus remained in the time of Constantine, (when there was none in some of the other seven cities; Gill in loc. and Acts xx. 17.) and a long time after, nor was at length removed except in common with others. With regard to *the Holy Catholic Church*, it was recovered from its declension by the severity of the Decian per-

secution. "It was not, says Milner, a local or intermitting, but an universal and constant persecution ; and therefore it must have transmitted great numbers to the regions where sin and pain shall be no more. The peace of thirty years had corrupted the whole Christian atmosphere ; *the lightning of the Decian rage refined and cleared it. No doubt the effects were salutary to the Church.* External Christianity might indeed have still spread, if no such scourge had been used ; but the internal spirit of the Gospel would probably have been extinguished. The storm, however, proved fatal to many individuals who apostatized, and *Christianity was in that way also cleared of many false friends.*" (Ecc. Hist. vol. i. p. 411). The Holy Catholic Church then of this period (I mean of this Apocalyptic period) having repented, the threat, which was conditional, was never executed ; her light was not removed. It is here that a general remark must have place. In *the argument* of these epistles, as the praise or blame awarded to each church, defines *the internal character* of each, so the threat or promise made to each predicts the *external condition* of each. Now, if these epistles be prophetic, as we pretend, of the *character and destinies* of the *Universal Church*, then it is to be expected, a priori, that they will contain some reference, more or less obvious, to the subsequent

visions of the prophecy, one main subject of which is, the destinies of that Church. Only except the conditional threat of this epistle, which was never executed, (and therefore cannot be considered as the prediction of an event) and we shall find this to be the case in all the other epistles, To this admonition our Lord subjoins a particular mark of his approbation.

(2.) *But this thou hast, that thou hatest the deeds of the Nicolaitans, which I also hate.*—Concerning these Nicolaitans there are two questions: first, as to their persons; and secondly, as to their names. As to their *persons*, it is asserted by all the Fathers, that the Nicolaitans were a branch of the Gnostics. Irenæus adds, that the doctrines of the Nicolaitans resembled those maintained by the Cerinthians. (Iren. ii. pref. iii. 4, 3. 11, 1. Mosheim. Diss. de Nicol.) Now the Cerinthians were Gnostics, who borrowed many tenets from Judaism. We may infer therefore that the Nicolaitans were Judaizing Gnostics. As to their *name*, it is not improbable that the Nicolaitans might have *claimed* Nicolas the deacon as the origin of their sect; for so they are stated to have, quoted a saying of Matthias in support of their opinions. Clem. Alex. Strom. iii. 4.) But the *earliest* Fathers acquit Nicolas the deacon of the charges

brought against him ; and Clement of Alexandria rejects it as a mere fable, that he was the author of this sect. (See Vitring. Obs Sacr. iv. 9.) It is a mere guess, to derive their name from some other unknown Nicolas. It is more probable, according to the opinion of Vitringa, Michaelis, Storr, Eichhorn, and others, that the sect derived their name from this very passage, and that it was affixed to them as a brand by our Lord himself. The name in fact appears to be fictitious and significative, like Apollyon ix. 11. It is a word composed of two in Greek, νίκος and λαός, intimating *the conquest of the people*, and corresponds with the word *Balaam*, which is in like manner compounded of two in Hebrew, בָּלַע and עַם intimating *the destruction of the people*. (See Gesenius and Wetstein.) This is farther confirmed by the Arabic version of Erpenius, in which *the deeds of the Nicolaitans* is rendered *the deeds of the Shuabites*. But the Arabic word Shuaib is equivalent to the Hebrew word Balaam, signifying the destroyers of the people. (Michaelis, introd. N. T. c. xxviii. § 3.) Accordingly, in the epistle to the Church at Pergamos, *the doctrine of Balaam* is used as synonymous with *the doctrine of the Nicolaitans*. ii. 14, 15.—What their doctrine and their deeds were, may be seen by comparing the last reference with 2 Pet. ii. 3, 10-13. Jude. 1 Jo. ii.

18. iv. 1. 2 Jo. 11. Peter wrote about the end of Nero's reign. Jude wrote after the fall of Jerusalem, (Dodwell Iren. i. § 14. Eus. H. E. iii. 11.) and had observed the progress of these men, probably Jews by birth, lurking in the Christian agapæ. John, who survived Jude, lived to see them setting up their false doctrine more boldly in the neighbourhood of Ephesus. Hence, probably, that remission of the former love of the Church, whether at Ephesus or elsewhere. How applicable this commendation was, both to the Church at Ephesus and to the Holy Catholic Church, of this period, we have already seen. (For further information, see Dr. Burton on the Heresies of the Apostolic Age, and the authors there so accurately referred to.)

III. *The Epilogue*, v. 7.

1. *He that hath an ear, let him hear.*—This form of exhortation was used by our Lord, when he taught by parables, and especially when he spoke of future retribution, whether good or evil. Matt. xiii. 43; Rev. xiii. 9. In these epistles it is connected with the *promise* in the epilogue. He that hath a spiritual ear, Jo. vi. 63; 2 Cor. iii. 6, let him hear what my prophetic Spirit saith to the churches. He does not say to the churches of *Asia* (as before, he

omitted *Asia*, i. 20) that our minds might be led beyond the seven churches immediately addressed, to the Holy Catholic Church represented by them.

2. *To him that overcometh, I will give him to eat of the tree of life, which is in the paradise of my God.* It is here that we must begin to remark a distinction between the *argument* and the *epilogue* of these epistles. In the *argument*, the promise or threat is predictive of the eternal condition of the church considered as a community ; but in the *epilogue* the promise (for threat there is none) is predictive of reward to the individual Christian victor. Again, it should be remarked, that as the *proem* of each epistle refers back to the description of the Lord, or to something else in the former part of the prophecy, so the *epilogue* of each epistle points forward to the victories and rewards described in the latter part of the prophecy. Thus the tree of life grows in the middle of the street of the holy city, xxii. 2 (with allusion to the situation of the tree of life in the garden of Eden. Gen. ii. 9.) and that city descending out of Heaven from God, is the paradise of God. xxi. 11 —The tree of life was a tree endued with the virtue of preserving life. Gen. ii. 16. 17. iii. 22. Christ is “ the power of God and the wisdom of God.”

1. Cor. i. 24. And "wisdom is a tree of life to all that lay hold on her." Prov. iii. 18. "In Christ is life." John i. 4. So that to eat of the tree of life, is to enjoy the closest communion with our Lord, which is eternal life.—Vitranga observes, that the word *paradise* is used by Diodorus in describing the gardens of Semiramis; and that he was satisfied by the erudite labors of Huet, that the seat of the original paradise was in the confines of *Persia*. He refers also to Plutarch (in Lysander) to shew that there was a great resort of the lieutenants of the King of Persia to Ephesus. Ephesus was long tributary to Persia, and was always a city dissolved in eastern luxury. No wonder then that the *early* Gnostics were frequent in such a place. Irenæus says, that the Nicolaitans were the first to go to every convivial entertainment of the heathen in honour of their gods. In opposition to any temptation from their example or persuasion, our Lord promises to the Christian victor the spiritual banquet of eternal life, not in rest merely, but in glory. (Luke xxiii. 43. Rev. xxii. 2. 14.) As Abraham, after battle, feasted with Melchizedek; and as Adam, before the fall, ate of the tree of life in the garden of God.

Many learned men, and among them such men

as Vitringa, and even Grotius, though with a different understanding, have conceived that all the names in the apocalyptic epistles, and *even those of the seven cities*, were by the marvellous providence of God so ordered as to become significative. I know it may be said, for indeed it has been, that the example of these able and learned men (*exemplum vitiis imitabile*) has herein recommended an exposition too fanciful. On the other hand, the Divine Providence is wonderful ; this prophecy is wonderful ; and at least every argument upon every part of it ought to be weighed. It is well known that proper names among the ancients were frequently significant ; thus *Egypt* had its name from the *black* mud deposited by the Nile ; (Marquis Spineto on Hieroglyphics, p. 341.) and those in use among the Israelites were generally characteristic. Nay farther, “ In the formation of proper names, the Hebrew language is extremely versatile. The general principle of their significancy being always kept in view, almost every combination of words containing allusions to the situation or history (whether real or imaginary) of the place or person named, seems to be allowable for this purpose.” (Mr. Gurney’s Biblical Notes, p. 358.) *Proper names therefore made significative would certainly assimilate this prophecy, still more completely in every part, to the character of the ancient prophe-*

cies. Upon the whole, I incline to this opinion ; and if it be correct, I am persuaded that the signification of each name refers, *by a fixed rule*, not to the internal character, but *to the external condition predicted in the argument of each epistle.* The city was only the place where *the church* was situated. The origin of the name *Εφεσος* is very uncertain ; some considering it as the proper name of its founder, and others deriving it fancifully from mere fables. The more general derivation is from *ἑφεῖναι immittere*. Eustathius says that some of the ancients considered it as changed by alliteration for *ἄφεις* (Berkel ad Stephan.) Hence some commentators have thought that there was an allusion to the preceding reproach, *τὴν ἀγάπην σου τὴν πρώτην ἀφῆκας*, and therefore I, *ὁ κρατῶν τὰς ἐπτά ἀσέρας ἐν τῇ δεξιᾷ αὐτοῦ*, will let go my hold of thee ; which will be the same as removing thy lamp-stand out of its place. (F. Stosch Syntagma de nom. Sept Urb. Asiæ Dissert. 1. § 6.) Even without the alliteration, *ἔφεις* has sometimes the sense of *dismissal* ; as *ἔφεις ασωφρόνισος* Greg. Naz. Dismissal without chastisement. *Ἐφίημι* also has sometimes the sense of *remission*, or letting go ; as *ἽΟλην ἐρεῖϊσα τὴν ἡνίαν* Greg. Naz. letting go the rein to the horse. *Πάσαν ἔοεις (τῷ ανεμῷ) ὁθόνην*, letting go the sail to the wind. Here therefore it might perhaps signify letting go the hand from pro-

tecting. But all this is very unsatisfactory ; neither is it needed ; *for the threat of this epistle being merely conditional (unless they repented) was never executed ; and thus, no real change of condition having been predicted, strictly no allusion in the name to what never happened should be expected.*

THE EPISTLE TO SMYRNA.

- 8 Καὶ τῷ ἀγγέλῳ τῆς ἐν Σμύρνῃ ἐκκλησίας
γράφον· τάδε λέγει ὁ πρῶτος καὶ ὁ ἔσχατος,
ὃς ἐγένετο νεκρὸς, καὶ ἔζησεν.
- 9 Οἶδα σε τὰ ἔργα, καὶ τὴν θλίψιν, καὶ τὴν
πτωχείαν, (ἀλλὰ πλῆσιος εἶ) καὶ τὴν βλασ-
φημίαν ἐκ τῶν λεγόντων Ἰδιαιῖς εἶναι ἑαυ-
τὸς, καὶ οὐκ εἶσιν, ἀλλὰ συναγωγὴ τῷ Σα-
τανᾷ· Μηδὲν φοβῆ ἃ μέλλεις πασχεῖν· ἰδὲ,
μέλλει βαλεῖν ὁ διάβολος ἐξ ὑμῶν εἰς φυλα-
κὴν, ἵνα πειρασθῇτε· καὶ ἔξετε θλίψιν ἡμερῶν
δέκα· γινε πιστὸς ἄχρι θανάτου, καὶ δώσω σοι
τὸν στέφανον τῆς ζωῆς.
- 11 Ὁ ἔχων οὖς, ἀκουσάτω, τί τὸ πνεῦμα λέγει
ταῖς ἐκκλησίαις· ὁ νικῶν οὐ μὴ ἀδικηθῇ ἐκ
τῷ θανάτου τῷ δευτέρῳ.

11.—8. *And to the angel of the church at Smyrna, write; Thus saith the first and the last, who was dead but is alive.*

9. *I know thy works, and thy affliction, and thy poverty, (but thou art rich) and the blasphemy of those who call themselves Jews, and are not,*
10. *but a synagogue of Satan.—Fear none of those things which thou art about to suffer. Behold, the Devil is about to cast some of you into prison, that you may be tried, and you shall have an affliction of ten days. Be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee the crown of life.*
11. *He that hath an ear let him hear what the spirit saith to the churches.—He that evercometh shall in no wise be hurt of the second death.*

COMMENT.

I. *The Proem, v. 8.*

1. *And to the angel of the church at Smyrna, write.*—Smyrna was situated next to Ephesus on the North. But the church at Smyrna was

V. 10. *An affliction of ten days.*—In the Apocalypse, $\theta\lambda\acute{\iota}\psi\iota\varsigma$ always signifies affliction produced by persecution, or at least suffering by violence. Sec. c. ii. 22.

The crown of life.—It may be useful to point out betimes, that the distinction is always observed in the Apocalypse, between $\sigma\acute{\epsilon}\phi\alpha\nu\omicron\varsigma$, the symbol of victory, c. ii. 10, iv. 4, 10, vi. 2, ix. 7, xii. 1, xiv. 14. And $\delta\iota\alpha\delta\eta\mu\alpha$, the symbol of regal authority, c. xii. 3, xiii. 1, xix. 12. The same distinction is *generally* observed in the Sept. The distinction was real; the crown was often of gold; the diadem was always a simple fascia, or scarf, like a turban, bound about the head. (See Mr. Cuninghame's Dissertation, p. 4, 5, third edition.) *The crown of life* is a Hebraism for a living and unfading crown. Comp. 1 Cor. ix. 25, 1 Pet. v. 4. (See Grellet. Prodrôm. in loc.)

addressed in the second place, chiefly because it was to be a type of the Holy Catholic Church of the second Apocalyptic period, or *from the reign of Decius until that of Constantine*—a long period chiefly characterized by persecution and patience.

2. *Thus saith the first and the last, who was dead but is alive.*—This is from the preceding description. i. 18. It may well be doubted whether any allusion be intended by the former of these attributes, as Lampe thinks, to the proud title which, as it appears from the Arundel marbles and other monuments of antiquity, was assumed by Smyrna, of being the *first* city of Asia; or by the latter, as Rosenmüller thinks, to the pretended resurrection of *Æsculapius*, who was particularly worshipped at Smyrna. But certainly both titles are very appropriate to the argument of this epistle: for as he was man, *who was dead but is alive*, he was able to sympathize with and encourage them in their affliction. v. 9. And as he was God, *the first and the last*, he was able to reward them with the crown of life. v. 10.

II. *The Argument, v. 9. 10.*

In this epistle there is no blame, no threat,

no exhortation to repentance ; nothing but, 1. approbation of their character, and 2. warning of their trial.

1. *I know thy works, and thy affliction, and thy poverty (but thou art rich), and the blasphemy of those who call themselves Jews, and are not, but a synagogue of Satan.*—Persecution had touched them both in person and property (Comp. Heb. x. 34), but they were spiritually rich, having, says Arethas, “ the treasure hidden in the field of the heart, which is Christ.” (Comp. c. xxi. 7. Luke xii. 21. Jas. ii. 5.) In this prophecy where all his cast in the mould of the temple, by *Jews* are meant “ the servants of God,” who are sometimes contrasted with “ the Nations,” or profane men. vii. 3. 9. xi. 2. It may be added, that the *first* servants of God in the Christian Church, and particularly in Asia, were Jews by extraction. “ James, Peter, and John went to the circumcision, and we can shew the diocese of each of them : James had Palestine and Syria ; Peter Babylon and Assyria ; and John the Hellenists, particularly in Asia and farther on.” (Lightfoot Hor. ad 1 Cor.) The *synagogue of Satan* (a contrast to the synagogue of the Lord. Num. xxxi. 16.) appears to include all false professors, but real enemies, of the truth, whether Jews or Gentiles by birth

John viii. 44. "The Gnostics adopted much of Judaism in their philosophy." (Dr. Burton in loc.) The blasphemy of *nominal Christians*, whether they blasphemed the Lord or calumniated the Church, would be one source of suffering to the Church. Perhaps too *the Jews by profession* ought, by a liberal interpretation, to be included in the reproach of being a synagogue of Satan : for, "He is not a Jew who is one outwardly ;" and "had they believed in Moses they would have believed in Christ." Rom. ii. 29. John i. 48. v. 46. First then as to *the church at Smyrna* ; their own character, at the date of the Apocalypse, needs no other testimony than this epistle. And with regard to their enemies, the synagogue of Satan, if we interpret them of *nominal Christians*, we cannot doubt but there were at Smyrna, as elsewhere in that age, some who pretended great zeal for the law, only to avoid persecution arising from the Jews. Comp. Acts xv. 1, 5 ; Gal. vi. 12, 13. If you include in the interpretation *literal Jews*, it is certain not only that they were every where the earliest persecutors, if not by their own hand, yet by exciting the Gentiles through their *calumnies* : (see the Acts and Epistles of the Apostles. Euseb. H. E. iv. 18. Baron. Ann. 254, tom. ii.) But we know also, both that the Jews were very numerous in all the maritime

cities of Asia, and that at Smyrna especially, at the martyrdom of Polycarp, not a great while after the date of the Apocalypse, the rage and activity of the Jews were conspicuous. (See the Epist. of the Ch. of Smyrna.) In the absence therefore of more direct, we have strong indirect evidence, which confirms the historic sense of this epistle. Next with regard to the prophetic sense, or the predicted character of *the Holy Catholic Church*, of the second Apocalyptic period—or from the reign of Decius to that of Constantine. It cannot be doubted that the various sects of Gnostics in general, who *called themselves Christians*, “but were always looked on as perfectly distinct from the Christian Church.” (Milner, vol. i. p. 139); and in particular the followers of Manes toward the end of the third century, spread as they were in all directions, East, West, and South, must have been a real affliction to the pure professors of the faith. “What does a man profit me (says Ignatius, in his epistle to Smyrna,) if he shall praise me and *blaspheme* my Lord, not confessing that he was truly made man?” With respect to the patient sufferings of the Church, it is well known that from the reign of Decius persecution became more general. The Roman empire sinking now perceptibly, it was superstitiously believed that the growth of Christianity, and the

consequent neglect of Pagan worship, had offended the Gods, and hastened on the day of calamity. Thenceforward persecution went on, from time to time, by authority of the Imperial edicts. Nero's persecution had been confined to Rome ; and that of Domitian in the provinces had been less grievous, not exceeding the penalties of confiscation and exile. But even those penalties grew extreme in the first great and general persecution under Decius. A very great multitude wandering over deserts and mountains, perished by famine, cold, disease, robbers, and wild beasts. The persecution under Valerian was of a similar character. (Euseb. H. E. vi. 36 ; Cyprian, Ep. 82 ; Mosheim, vol. i. p. 250 ; Milner, vol. i. p. 451, 470 ; Gibbon, vol. i. p. 560 ; 4to.) The *visible Church* needed this purgation ; and in the process the chaff flew off, but the good seed remained. (Cyprian de Laps. Dion. Alex. Ep. 80.) It was *the constant endurance* which *the spiritual Church* maintained throughout this long and disastrous period which formed its leading feature, and which in this epistle meets with nothing but approbation from her compassionate Lord. True it is that particularly just before the Dioclesian persecution, the spiritual character of the church sunk under a temporary prosperity. " If Christ's kingdom, says Milner, had been of this world, and if its

strength and beauty were to be measured by secular prosperity, we should fix the era of its greatness in the pacific part of Diocletian's reign : but on the contrary the era of its actual declension must be dated there."—"Notwithstanding this decline both of zeal and of principle ; notwithstanding this scarcity both of evangelical graces and fruits, still Christian worship was constantly attended, and the number of nominal converts was increasing—but the faith of Christ itself appeared now an ordinary business ; and here terminated, or nearly so, as far as appears, that first great effusion of the Spirit of God which began at the day of Pentecost. Human depravity effected throughout a general decay of godliness, and one generation of men elapsed with very slender proofs of the spiritual presence of Christ with his Church." (Milner, vol. i. 497. Gibbon, vol. i. p. 564. 565. 4to.) It will never be forgotten, that with the persecution the spirit of martyrdom revived in the church, which was not more chastised than purified. I have transcribed the above passage fearlessly, as in no wise derogating from the prophetic sense of this epistle, being assured that every Christian who understands any thing of the divine love of our Lord, will also understand why, *when he would describe the suffering patience of his church,*

he is not solicitous, in the same breath, to exaggerate, or even to mention her faults. In the epistle to the church at Ephesus, he would mark *her first love and first declension*, the pregnant source of all her more aggravated persecutions ; but in the epistle addressed to Smyrna, he would describe *her patience under those persecutions*, and he adds no reproach.

2. He proceeds to encourage them to faith and constancy by foretelling (1) the extent and limits of their trial, and (2) the certainty of their victory.

(1.) *Fear none of those things which thou art about to suffer. Behold, the devil is about to cast some of you into prison, that you may be tried ; and you shall have an affliction of ten days.* Every word tends to confirm and console them. The persecution will be severe and call them to suffering ; yet it is not their Lord, but the false accuser, who, by his agents on earth, shall vex them. (c. xiii. 2 ; Gen. iii. 15.) He shall cast some of them, not all, into prison. The mention of death is deferred till it is coupled with the promise of the crown of life. All this is but *to try* them—they are going into the field of honor ; and their trial is not for ever, but only for a limited period, defined even by number. *Ten*

days defines a short period. (Gen. xxiv. 55 ; Num. xi. 19 ; Dan. i. 12.) Yet it is certain that some severer trial than ordinary was predicted here. Now, with regard to *the church at Smyrna*, that city, from ancient even to modern times, has been always stained with the blood of martyrs. By the affliction of *ten days* was very probably intended that memorable persecution, short but severe, which was closed by the martyrdom of Polycarp. In the account of that martyrdom, written by the church at Smyrna (Euseb. H. E. iv. 15), two circumstances are remarkable ; one, that their trial in *prison* was unusually severe, for they were compelled to lie upon sharp spikes ; the other, that Polycarp, whose death appeased the storm, “was the *twelfth* martyr, together with those of Philadelphia, who suffered.” From the last circumstance, and indeed from the whole account, it is plain that this persecution, which was local, was also short, and may therefore have been literally only of ten days. With regard to *the Holy Catholic Church*, first, it may be laid down as a principle, disputed indeed by some but without good reason, that as God himself both in the law and in the prophets especially (Num. xiv. 34 ; Ezek. iv. 6), has used the period of *a day*, to be the figurative representative of *a year*, we therefore are not only allowed but invited to

understand that term in the figurative language of prophecy in the same sense. The context must decide the occasion of applying the principle, but the principle itself is sound. A *day*, like a *year*, is a revolution, ἐνιαυτός. The lesser revolution may be understood *literally* of the less event, and the greater revolution *figuratively* of the greater event. Upon this principle of interpretation we discover here an express prediction of the Diocletian persecution, which being the last and worst, and therefore fitly singled out to represent them all, raged exactly ten years. (From A. D. 403 to 413; Eus. H. E. viii. 15, 16; Lactant. c. 48; Oros. vii. 25). "To this state of the Church, says Sir I. Newton, the second epistle to the Church at Smyrna agrees." And Bengel has remarked the singularity, that in this epistle alone, dropping all threat or mention of *the coming of the Lord*, whether figurative or literal, notice is given of an affliction of ten days, and the angel of the church is exhorted to be faithful unto *death*. (Bengel, Introd. Par. i. § 26). And now also we begin to apply the *internal evidence* of the book for the prophetic sense of the epistles; for it will not be difficult to shew, that in the second vision of this prophecy, and in its proper place in the series of events, this same period of time is marked by a corresponding prediction. "And

when he opened the fifth seal, I saw below the altar the souls of those that were sacrificed for the word of God, and for the testimony which they held." vi. 9-11; Comp. vii. 14. He proceeds to foretell the certainty of their victory.

(2.) *Be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee the crown of life.*—We must here recollect a general rule already mentioned (Comment. ii. 7), that in the *epilogue* of each epistle the promise is predictive of reward to the individual victor, but in the *argument* of each, the promise or threat is predictive of the destiny of the church as a community. *The crown of life*, or the emblem of victory (see Note) applied to an individual, signifies the reward of eternal life. (Jas. i. 12; 1 Cor. ix. 25). But in all these epistles the individual *angel* of each church is addressed as the representative of his church; so that the crown of life here signifies a promise of perpetual existence to the Church; it being a Hebraism for a living or unfading crown. (See Note.) First, with regard to the *church at Smyrna*, perhaps it may have been intended to have a particular application to Polycarp, who suffered martyrdom not very long after the date of the Apocalypse. (Euseb. H. E. iv. 14, 15.) And if it has, well did he remember the exhortation, when he replied to the Proconsul—"Eighty and six years do I serve him, and never did he wrong me, how

then can I blaspheme my King who saved me ?” Still it was the Church which was ultimately intended in this part of the epistle ; and we have the testimony of a late traveller to “ the remarkable fact, that while the site of each of the three churches which called forth the denunciation in these epistles of our Lord’s displeasure is a heap of abandoned ruins, on the other hand, the churches of Smyrna and Pergamos, of Thyatira and Philadelphia, still contain flourishing communities of Christians.” (Hartley’s Visit to the Apocalyptic Churches.) But of these Smyrna wears the crown and flourishes far the most, not in numbers only, but in character ; for although ignorance and error still characterise the Greek Church, yet the connexion which Smyrna has enjoyed with Protestant nations has contributed in some degree to enlighten it. Smyrna has even its bible society, patronized by its Bishop. With regard to the *Holy Catholic Church* of this period, her enemies indeed not only threatened *extermination*, but boasted that they had exterminated—(“ *nomine Christiano deleto ;*”) yet the Church survived. “ The gates of hell shall not prevail against it.”

III. *The Epilogue.* v. 11.

1. *He that hath an ear, let him hear what the spirit saith to the churches.*

2. *He that overcometh shall in no wise be hurt of the second death.*—The second death is the lake of fire and sulphur, xx. 6. 14. xxi. 18. and is an expression peculiar to the Apocalypse, but borrowed from the Chaldee Paraphrast on Deut. xxxiii. 6. Isai. xxiv. 14, and many other places. It is the opposite to everlasting life; and the hope of escaping it is the appropriate motive to the members of a persecuted church. “Fear not them which kill the body, but are not able to kill the soul; but rather fear him which is able to destroy both body and soul in Hell.” Matt. x. 28. Dan. xii. 1. John viii. 51. 52. Yet more than a negative blessing is implied here. When the first resurrection is introduced, this promise is repeated with addition. “Blessed and holy is he that hath part in the first resurrection; *over these the second death hath no authority; but they shall be priests and kings of God and of Christ, and shall reign with him a thousand years.*” xx. 6.

If there be any prophetic allusion in the name of the city, Smyrna, it is to the external state of suffering to which *the Church* was subjected. There is only a difference of orthography between Σμύρνα and μύρρη. Hoffman (Lexic. Univ.) says, that Smyrna was called by the *later* Greeks Σμυρίνα, and thence Μυρίνα and Μυρρίνα. Salmasius

(Exerc. Plin. p. 607) quotes Eusebius for it. *Μυρίνα*, ἡ παρὰ τισι Σμύρνα λεγομένη, ἐκτίσθη ἐν Ασία. He adds, that Agathias, who was of Smyrna, is frequently called in MSS. *Μυριναιῖος* and *Μυρρίναιῖος*. Stosch suggests it should be no wonder that *Σμύρνα*, the name both of the city and of the plant, should be changed into *Μύρα* and *Μύρρα*, since the elision of *σ* before *μ* is common in many other words. (Stosch, Syntagma Diss. ii. § 9. Matthæi quotes Cod. p. as reading *Μύρναν* for *Σμύρναν*. c. i. 11. Some say the city was called after the name of the Amazon who founded it. Plutarch says that it derived its name from the plant, *myrrh*. (Tom. i, p. 568 ; ii. p. 310 ; ed. Wæchel.) However, what is the *derivation* of the name is not the question, but what may be its *signification*, and whether by the marvellous providence of God even this matter was over-ruled ; for *myrrh* is the established emblem for *bitterness and suffering*. (See Ruth i. 20 ; comp. Rev. viii. 11.)

THE EPISTLE TO PERGAMOS.

- 12 Καὶ τῷ ἀγγέλῳ τῆς ἐν Περγάμῳ ἐκκλησίας
γράφον· τάδε λέγει ὁ ἔχων τὴν ῥομφαίαν
τὴν δίξομον τὴν ὀξεῖαν·
- 13 Οἶδα τὰ ἔργα σου, καὶ πᾶς κατοικεῖς, ὅπως ὁ
θρόνος τοῦ Σατανᾶ· καὶ κρατεῖς τὸ ὄνομά
μου, καὶ ἐκ ἡρνήσω τὴν πῖσιν μου, καὶ ἐν ταῖς
ἡμέραις, ἐν αἷς Ἀντίπατος ὁ μάρτυς μου ὁ
πίστος, ὃς ἀπεκτάνθη παρ' ὑμῖν, ὅπως ὁ Σά-
14 τανᾶς κατοικεῖ. Ἀλλ' ἔχω κατὰ σὲ ὀλίγα,
ὅτι ἔχεις ἐκεῖ κρατῶντας τὴν διδαχὴν Βα-
λαάμ, ὃς ἐδίδασκε τῷ Βαλὰκ βαλεῖν σκάν-
δαλον ἐνώπιον τῶν υἱῶν Ἰσραὴλ, φαγεῖν εἶδω-
15 λόθουτα καὶ πορνεῦσαι. Οὕτως ἔχεις καὶ σὺ
κρατῶντας τὴν διδαχὴν τῶν Νικολαϊτῶν
16 ὁμοίως. Μετανόησον ἔν· εἰ δὲ μὴ, ἔρχομαί
σοι ταχὺ, καὶ πολεμήσω μετ' αὐτῶν ἐν τῇ
ρομφαίᾳ τοῦ στόματός μου.
- 17 Ὁ ἔχων ἔσ· ἀκυσάτω, τί τὸ πνεῦμα λέγει
ταῖς ἐκκλησίαις τῷ· νικῶντι δώσω αὐτῷ τῷ

μάννα τῷ κεκρυμμένῳ, καὶ δώσω αὐτῷ ψῆφον
 λευκὴν, καὶ ἐπὶ τὴν ψῆφον ὄνομα καινὸν γε-
 γραμμένον, ὃ οὐδεὶς οἶδεν εἰ μὴ ὁ λαμβάνων.

- II.—12. *And to the angel of the church at Pergamos, write ; Thus saith he that hath the sharp, the two-edged weapon.*
13. *I know thy works, and where thou dwellest, where the throne of Satan is : and thou holdest my name, and didst not deny my faith, even in those days in which Antipas was my faithful witness, who was slain among*
14. *you where Satan dwelleth.—But I have a little against thee ; that thou hast there those who hold the doctrine of Balaam, who taught Balak to set a snare before the sons of Israel, to eat of idol-sacrifices, and to commit forni-*
15. *cation : So hast thou also those who hold the doctrine of the Nicolaitans in like manner.—*
16. *Repent, therefore, or else I will come to thee quickly ; and I will wage war with them with the weapon of my mouth.*
17. *He that hath an ear, let him hear what the spirit saith to the churches.—To him that*

V. 12. *Weapon.*—See Note i. 16.

V. 14. *A little.*—This ὀλίγα is not inserted to lighten the blame either of Ephesus, or (according to Griesbach's text) of Thyatira, ii. 4, 20. It must therefore be emphatic, and affect the exposition. It is one of many instances which shew the importance, in this book especially, of a critical edition of the text.

V. 17. *The manna which is treasured up*—Or, as Wakefield, “which is laid up.” I adopt this version the more readily as it

overcometh, I will give him of the manna which is treasured up; and I will give him a white pebble, and upon the pebble a new name written which no one understandeth save who receiveth it.

COMMENT.

1. *The Proem, v. 12.*

1. *And to the angel of the church at Pergamos, write.*—Pergamos was situated next in order to the North of Smyrna: but the church at Pergamos was next addressed, because it was to be a type of the Holy Catholic Church during the third Apocalyptic period—which extends from the age of Constantine to the age of Luther.

2. *Thus saith he that hath the sharp, the two-edged weapon.*—This is from the preceding description. i. 16. Vitrunga remarks that there may be an allusion here to the military glory for which Pergamos was renowned. (Pausan. Attic. lib. i.) The title is certainly very appropriate to the argument of the epistle; for hence it appears, that he wants no means to avenge those

discountenances at once the idea of any reference being intended here to the Jewish fable—that, at the captivity, the ark and the urn which held the manna were *hidden* by Jeremiah, and will one day be discovered again. The allusion here is plainly to the manna *laid up* in the ark. Exod. xvi. 32, 34; comp. Col. ii. 3, iii. 3.

who were slain among them, v. 13 ; or to subdue those who held the doctrine of Balaam. v. 14, 16. The angel met Balaam with the sword drawn in his hand.

II. *The Argument*, v. 13-16.

1. He begins with their character, in which he mingles (1) general commendation with (2) some blame.

(1.) *I know thy works, and where thou dwellest, where the throne of Satan is : and thou holdest my name, and didst not deny my faith, even in those days in which Antipas was my faithful witness, who was slain among you where Satan dwelleth.*—In Smyrna and in Philadelphia Satan has a *synagogue*. ii. 9 ; iii. 9 ; but in Pergamos, where he dwelleth, he has a *throne*.—First with regard to *the church at Pergamos* ; Andreas Cæsariensis remarks that Pergamos was filled with idols more than any other city in Asia ; and that on this account it might justly be called the throne of Satan. Others have thought that it might be so called because of the annual games, and a very celebrated temple, dedicated there to Æsculapius (whose cures and resurrection were by Celsus blasphemously confronted with those of our Lord.

Origen adv. Cels. lib. iii. p. 124. ed Spenc.) and where serpents, sacred to Æsculapius (perhaps from some tradition of the cures by the brazen serpent) were kept at the public expence. All the coins of Pergamos, according to Spanheim, bore the impress of a serpent. Vitranga suggests that it may have been called the throne of Satan because of a new species of idolatry introduced since the age of Augustus into various places, but first according to Tacitus at Pergamos. (Tac. Ann. iv. 55.) This was a temple dedicated to the Emperor, the portico of which is represented, with eight columns, on many of its medals. It is certain that Pergamos was the mother city in Asia of the Roman Empire; and that of that empire Satan is represented, in this prophecy, as virtually the prince, and occupying the throne. xii. 3. xiii. 2. xvi. 10. And this moreover is even more certain, that the two great characteristics of Satan are *lies and murders*. (John viii. 44), and that wherever those two enormities are combined and prevail, there the throne of Satan is: but they did so prevail at Pergamos; witness the doctrine of the Nicolaitans, and the martyrdom of Antipas. As to this Antipas, who is said to have been roasted in a brazen bull ("ce que je laisse à examiner aux critiques," says Bossuet,) the legend of his martyrdom, quoted by Ham-

mond, is by Grotius rejected, and defended I believe by none. Some eminent individual who actually suffered martyrdom at Pergamos, probably in the reign of Domitian, and in a local tumult, is referred to here beyond doubt ; and indeed Andreas Cæsariensis reports that he had seen an account of the martyrdom of this Antipas. But in the absence of any positive or satisfactory evidence concerning either his history or his death, it may justly be questioned whether this name of *Antipas* be not, like that of the *Nicolaitans*, fictitious and symbolical. This conception is strengthened by the Syriac version, which omits the word Antipas as a proper name, and supplies it by a periphrasis ; and which, after a conjectural emendation by De Dieu, runs thus : “ In which my faithful witness *was set forth as a spectacle.*” As if the translator desired thus to convey the force of the compound *Αντιπας* quasi *ὁ ἐναντίον πάντων παραδειγματισθείς*. Comp. 1. Cor. iv. 9. (See Apoc. Syr. ed. De Dieu. 4to. p. 173.) Upon the whole, although it appears to be most probable that the *literal proper name* neither of any individual nor of any sect is recorded in these epistles ; yet the *matter of fact* of the historic sense is not to be doubted. Next with regard to the prophetic sense, as it applies to the *Holy Catholic Church* of this third apocalyptic period ; that is, from the age of Constantine to

that of Luther. First I quote authority for part of the above exposition. "The special residence of Satan is, where the faithful are persecuted for Christ's truth." (N. T. of Rhemes, marginal note in loc. fol. ed. Fulke.) And if this exposition be just, then that throne was fixed in the territory subject to the jurisdiction of Rome after she became first, apostate from the truth, and afterwards the persecutor of the saints; and the far greater portion of the spiritual Church of Christ was seated chiefly in that territory during the far greater portion of this period of time. *Individuals*, the elect of God, we may not be able to reckon up; but the only pure *churches* in the world, during this period, the Vallenses and the Albigenses, dwelt under the very skirts of Rome. Unseduced by the Arian *lie*, unsubdued by papal *murders*, they held fast the name of the Lord, and never denied his faith: And both of these, and of others, how many thousands were *slain*, as Antipas, only because they would not subscribe to the errors of the church of Rome, is too notorious to be more than mentioned. (See Sir I. Newton, tom. v. p. 477. ed. Horsley.) I leave others to decide, or to dispute, upon the question, Whether Ἀντίπας may be considered as a contraction of Ἀντιπάππας or Ἀντιπάτρος with any allusion to martyrdom for opposition to the papacy. But I certainly think it a very curious

fact, that the pastors of the Vaudois were invariably denominated *barbes*, which in their dialect is a term of respect signifying, not fathers but *uncles*; a departure from common usage which appears to be inexplicable, except upon the supposition of their determination to shun even a verbal imitation of the assumed paternity of the Pope. (See Acland's Compendium, prefixed to "the Glorious Recovery," p. xliii.) To this general commendation our Lord appends a gentle reprehension.

(2.) *But I have a little against thee; that thou hast there those who hold the doctrine of Balaam, who taught Balak to set a snare before the sons of Israel; to eat of idol-sacrifices, and to commit fornication. So hast thou also those who hold the doctrine of the Nicolaitans in like manner.*—Balaam having been at first compelled to bless the people of God in his oracle, was at last allowed to curse them in fact by the success of his counsel; which was, to tempt them by women to idolatry, and to their ruin. (Num. xxv. 2, 18; xxxi. 16; Mic. iv. 5; Jos. Antiq. iv. 6, 2, 3, 9. Vitring. Obs. Sacr. iv. 9, § 27). To his counsel the doctrine of the Nicolaitans is compared. (See Comment ii. 6). With regard to *the church at Pergamos* it is to be observed, that she is gently reproved because some of her members,

not all the church, held this doctrine. At Ephesus their *doctrine* was not tolerated, and their *deeds* were abhorred. ii. 6. A zeal like that of Phineas had crushed the mischief there. It required indeed all the zeal of the church at Ephesus to detect and explode this evil ; for so happy was the effect of the edict of the apostles, Acts xv. that until the reign of Trajan it was every where latent rather than open. (Dodwell Diss. in Iren. i. § 15, 16). In default of such zeal some members of the church at Pergamos had been deceived by the seducers, and held their doctrine. There is nothing, I believe, extant in confirmation of this part of the epistle. With regard to *the Holy Catholic Church* of this period, *the main body* of it, the Vallenses, the Albigenses, and their numerous disciples, raised their testimony against the corruptions and errors of the church of Rome, faithfully, unequivocally, and unremittingly throughout this period. In England, France, and Germany, Beda, Alcuin, Bernard, and many other holy men protested against the *immorality* of the church of Rome ; many others disapproved in their judgment, and disowned in their conscience, *both her doctrine and practice* (as we know from the confessions of many who at last quitted her pale) : but too many of these, entangled in their judgment, and seduced in their conscience, were justly reprehensible for

holding her *doctrine*, and not sufficiently hating her *deeds*. Nevertheless, because of the general darkness, and of other difficulties, which in many individual cases were no doubt well nigh overwhelming, the reproof here is lightened (as it was not even in the case of Ephesus), and our compassionate Lord only says, "I have a *little* against thee." (See note.)

2. Their character having been thus accurately defined, he adds a double threat; (1) the one, conditional against the church; (2) the other, unconditional against her seducers.

(1.) *Repent, therefore, or else I will come to thee quickly.*—I will *punish* thee unless thou repent. Whether *the church at Pergamos* repented, or not, I believe we have no means of ascertaining. *The Holy Catholic Church* of this period we well know did repent at last, and testified the truth of their repentance at the Reformation; the main body casting off all communion with those modern Nicolaitans.—Our Lord having exhorted the church to repentance, that she might not be partakers of the others' plagues, it is of the Nicolaitans, her seducers, that he next threatens.

(2.) *And I will wage war with them with the weapon of my mouth.*—The angel withstood

Balaam with the sword drawn in his hand. Balaam however turned not back, and he fell at last, by the sword, among the open enemies of the people of God. He seems to have had an early presage, that he should not die the death of the righteous. Num. xxii. 22, 23. xxv. 5. xxxi. 8. To that history the threat appears to allude. The threat is one of severe judgments upon the seducers of his church, whether ancient or modern Nicolaitans; and observe, that no condition of pardon upon repentance is reserved here; the event is predicted. (See comment i. 16.) How this threat was executed *at Pergamos* we have again no information. With regard to the enemies of *the Holy Catholic Church* of this period, it is to be remembered that God is slow to anger, and that in the economy of divine Providence upon earth, it is some late generation which, representing as it were all former hatred and hostility, receives the weight of his final indignation. It was eminently thus in the case both of the Amorites and of the Jews themselves. Gen. xv. 16. Matt. xxiii. 35. Accordingly there would be no difficulty in shewing, in its proper place, that the same economy is marked in this book; and that the modern Nicolaitans, persisting in their seduction to the end, are finally to be slain by this very weapon. "And the rest were *slain by the weapon* of him that sat

upon the horse, and *which proceeded out of his mouth*, and all the fowls were glutted with their flesh." xix. 11—21. Comp. xvii. 14. This is another instance of *internal evidence* for the prophetic sense of these epistles.

III. *The Epilogue*, v. 17.

1. *He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith to the churches.*

2. *To him that overcometh.*—The promise here is, for the first time, two-fold.

(1.) *I will give him to eat of the manna which is treasured up.*—"And Moses said, this is the thing which the Lord commandeth; fill an omer of it (the manna) to be kept for your generations, that they may see the bread wherewith I have fed you in the wilderness, when I brought you forth from the land of Egypt. And Moses said unto Aaron, take a pot, and put an omer full of manna therein, and lay it up before the Lord, to be kept for your generations. As the Lord commanded Moses, so Aaron *laid it up before the testimony*, to be kept." Exod. xvi. 32-34. *The testimony* was, the two tablets of the law which testifies of God's will and of man's duty; and hence the ark also in which

they were deposited was called the testimony. Exod. xxvi. 16; xxxi. 18; xxxiv. 29. From a comparison of Heb. ix. 4, with Deut. xxxi. 26, and 1 Kings viii. 9, it should seem that the pot of manna was deposited in some receptacle immediately adjoining the ark; which ark was within the veil. To partake then of that manna, the ark itself must be revealed. But Christ is the true ark (the symbol of the divine presence, Num. x. 33-35,) "in whom are hid," like the tablets of the law in the ark, "all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge." (Col. ii. 3.) And he is the true *mercy-seat*. (Rom. iii. 25. *ἱλαστήριον*. With Heb. ix. 5, comp. Exod. xxv. 17, where this word is first introduced by the Septuagint, and which is ever after appropriated to that use. Bp. Marsh's Note upon Michaelis' Intr. to N. T.) Christ is also "the true bread from heaven; for the bread of God is he which cometh down from heaven, and giveth life unto the world." Jo. vi. 32, 33; Ps. cv. 40. This bread, unlike the common manna, but like that which was laid up, is incorruptible. Like that also, it is at present treasured up within the veil; "and our life is treasured up with Christ, in God. When Christ, who is our life, is manifested, then shall ye also with him be manifested in glory." Col. iii. 3, 4; comp. 1 Jo. iii. 2. In this epilogue then is given to every individual

victor a promise of communion with the Lord at his revelation. It is distinct from the promise of *the tree of life*, in the epilogue of the epistle to the church at Ephesus. ii. 7 ; xxii. 2. It is to be enjoyed previously to that, and points forward to a circumstance twice recorded in the prophecy. "And the temple of God was opened in heaven, and *the ark of the covenant* was seen in his temple. And there followed lightnings, and voices, and thunders, and earthquake, and great hail." xi. 19 ; Comp. xv. 5-8. "And after this I beheld, and the temple of the tabernacle of *the testimony* in heaven was opened." These two passages, as Mr. Frazer so well expresses it, like the corresponding loops in the curtains of the tabernacle, are so constructed as to indicate their meeting in the same period of time. This promise is confirmed by a second.

(2.) *And I will give him a white pebble, and upon the pebble a new name written, which no one understandeth, save who receiveth it.*—The pebble was used among the ancients as a counter, to calculate ; and the *white pebble* was used chiefly on these occasions. (1.) *In courts of justice*, if the majority of the judges cast a white pebble into the urn the accused was acquitted. Some commentators have adopted this allusion ; but there is this objection to it, that no names were

wont to be inscribed on the white pebble on such occasions. (2.) *At the games*, the competitors were assorted by lot, and the victor is said to have been distinguished by the white pebble. Arethas, Grotius, Petit, and others have adopted this allusion, while some have combined this with the former. But here again I have seen no authority produced for the inscription of the name. (3.) *In elections*, the name of the candidate voted for *was* written on a white pebble and cast into an urn. S. Meyer and others have adopted this as the allusion intended here. From these particular usages, the white pebble became a general emblem of happiness ; and happy days were enumerated at the end of the year by the number of white pebbles deposited in an urn during its course. (C. D. Funcii Dissert. Thes. Theo-Phil. ii. p. 829.) These were Gentile customs ; yet Paul pleading before Agrippa uses the same term in the judicial sense. (Acts xxvi. 10 Gr.) I think it is also plain from the writings of Aristides, who lived in the reign of Aurelius, that the term *ψήφος* was in familiar use with the votaries of Æsculapius, as expressive of his favour. (Elsner. Obs. Sacr. vol. ii. 443.) There may be a kind of contrast to that use implied here. But upon the whole, the use of the white pebble, inscribed with the name of the successful candidate at elections to

office, appears to me to be the allusion intended. As the former promise of the manna referred to the temple, so the latter of the white pebble appears to refer also to the usages of the temple. The priests and Levites used to be examined before they were admitted to the service of *the temple*, or to *the Sanhedrim*: if they were found approved at the examination, they received *the stone of the sanctuary*; if not, they might not enter upon their ministry. (See Gill in loc. who quotes Sohar in Levit. fol. 81.) And this view of it is confirmed by the reference pointed at here to the latter part of the prophecy. There—the heaven being opened (as before xi. 19; xv. 5-8.) He on the white horse also “*had a name written which no one understandeth but himself.*” xix. 12. In that passage indeed two names are attributed to him. “*And his name is called the Word of God.*” xix. 13. He is that Priest, who is also the great Prophet and manifestation of God. But it is added, “*he had upon his vesture and upon his thigh his name written, King of kings and Lord of lords.*” xix. 16. He is not a priest only, or a prophet, but a king also. This promise then is one of the election of his people to a similar office. Now they are his *witnesses*; then “*they shall reign upon earth.*” v. 10. “*They shall reign for ever and ever.*” xxii. When Abram, Jacob, or Simon, were advanced to new

honors, they had a new name given them : when the Lord and his people attain their highest elevation, they are said to have a new name given them ; and it is the same name as is afterwards promised, “ I will write upon him—my name, my new one.” iii. 14. “ Because,” says Daubuz, “ he will make his saints partakers of his glory, he has promised he will give them ‘ a new name written, which no one understandeth, save who receiveth it.’ Their condition shall never be known how glorious it is, till it be manifested ; and then it shall be felt and understood only by themselves : it shall be *wonderful*.” Daubuz, xix. 12. D.

Lastly, combine both these promises of the name and of the white pebble, and you will discern the reference to Isai. lxxv. 13—15. “ Behold, my servants *shall eat*, but ye shall be hungry ; behold, my servants shall drink, but ye shall be thirsty ; behold, my servants shall rejoice, but ye shall be ashamed ; behold, my servants shall sing for joy of heart, but ye shall cry for sorrow of heart, and shall howl for vexation of spirit. And ye shall leave *your name* for a curse unto my chosen ; for the Lord God shall slay thee, and *call his servants by another name*.” Comp. Isai. lxii. 2. The promise of *the manna* refers to the enjoyment and

happiness of the victor, and of *the white pebble* to his future office and dignity. Most appropriate they are both to the argument of the epistle: they who would resist the seductions of the idol-feast, and submit even to the violence of the enemy, rather than deny his faith or not retain *his name*, should have a name and a feast of their own.

If there be any prophetic allusion in the name of the city, Pergamos, it is as before to the external condition in which *the Church* shall be placed. But in this epistle there is nothing *directly and obviously* predicted of the external condition of the Church, yet it may be *implied* in the only prediction given of external events, which is against her seducers; “and I will wage war with them with the weapon of my mouth.” v. 16. (See the Comment). Now when he comes “in righteousness to judge and make war,” “the armies in heaven follow him upon white horses, clothed in linen pure-white.” See xix. 11-16, or, as it is elsewhere intimated, “these shall wage war with the Lamb, and the Lamb shall obtain the victory over them (for he is Lord of lords, and King of kings), and they that are with him; called and faithful and chosen.” xvii. 14. In those judgments therefore the church as a body will take a conspicuous part.

I am convinced by sufficient arguments that the passage, xix. 11-16, is a symbolical prophecy of the personal coming of our Lord, "and all the saints with him." But if either the church at Pergamos, or the Holy Catholic Church of this period (the third Apocalyptic period) shall take any conspicuous part in those judgments, they must rise "to meet the Lord in the air." (Comp. i. Thess. iv. 17. Zec. xiv. 5. Rev. xx. 5.) In that case they would be emphatically in Pergamos. The Acropolis of Pergamos occupies a mountain which rises about two hundred feet above the plain, and commands a view of the mountains of Mytilene, and the waters of the *Ægean* stretching onward to the Bosphorus. Its proper name, Pergamos, was originally that of the Acropolis of Ilium; *but it was also the common appellative of any great altitude.* (Hesych. Suid. Scriv. ad *Æneid.* 2.)

THE EPISTLE TO THYATIRA.

- 18 Καὶ τῷ ἀγγέλῳ τῆς ἐν Θυατείροις ἐκκλησίας
γράφον· τάδε λέγει ὁ υἱὸς τοῦ Θεοῦ, ὁ ἔχων
τοὺς ὀφθαλμοὺς αὐτοῦ ὡς φλόγα πυρὸς, καὶ
οἱ πόδες αὐτοῦ ὅμοιοι χαλκολιβάνῳ.
- 19 Οἶδά σε τὰ ἔργα, καὶ τὴν ἀγάπην, καὶ τὴν
πίσιν, καὶ τὴν διακονίαν, καὶ τὴν ὑπομονὴν σε,
καὶ τὰ ἔργα σε τὰ ἔσχατα πλείονα τῶν
20 πρώτων. Ἀλλ' ἔχω κατὰ σε, ὅτι ἀφῆεις
τὴν γυναῖκα σε Ἰεζάβελ, ἣ λέγεσσα ἑαυτὴν
προφῆτιν, καὶ διδάσκει καὶ πλανᾷ τοὺς ἐμὺς
δούλους, πορνεῦσαι καὶ φαγεῖν εἰδωλόθυτα.
- 21 Καὶ ἔδωκα αὐτῇ χρόνον ἵνα μετανοήσῃ, καὶ
ὃ θέλει μετανοήσῃ ἐκ τῆς πορνείας αὐτῆς.
- 22 Ἴδὲ βάλλω αὐτὴν εἰς κλίνην, καὶ τοὺς μοι-
χεύοντας μετ' αὐτῆς εἰς θλίψιν μεγάλην,
ἐὰν μὴ μετανοήσωσιν ἐκ τῶν ἔργων αὐτῆς,
- 23 Καὶ τὰ τέκνα αὐτῆς ἀποκτενῶ ἐν θανάτῳ·
καὶ γνώσονται πᾶσαι αἱ ἐκκλησίαι, ὅτι ἐγώ

εἰμι ὁ ἐρευνῶν νεφρὰς καὶ καρδίας· καὶ δώσω
 23 ὑμῖν ἐκάσῳ κατὰ τὰ ἔργα ὑμῶν. Ὑμῖν δὲ
 λέγω, τοῖς λοιποῖς ἐν Θυατείροις, ὅσοι ἐκ
 ἔχουσι τὴν διδαχὴν ταύτην, οἵτινες ἐκ ἐγνω-
 σαν τὰ βαδέα τῷ Σατανᾷ (ὡς λέγουσιν)· ἔ
 25 βαλῶ ἐφ' ὑμᾶς ἄλλο βάρος· πλὴν ὃ ἔχετε,
 κρατήσατε, ἄχρις ἧς ἂν ἴξω.
 26 Καὶ ὁ νικῶν, καὶ ὁ τηρῶν ἄχρι τέλους τὰ
 ἔργα μου, δώσω αὐτῷ ἐξουσίαν ἐπὶ τῶν ἐθνῶν.
 27 (Καὶ ποιμανεῖ αὐτὸς ἐν ῥάβδῳ σιδηρᾷ· ὡς
 28 τὰ σκεύη τὰ κεραμικὰ συντρίβεται,) Ὡς καὶ γὰρ
 εἶληφα παρὰ τοῦ πατρὸς μου· καὶ δώσω αὐτῷ
 29 τὸν ἄστέρα τὸν πρωῒνον. Ὁ ἔχων ἔς, ἀκκ-
 σάτω, τί τὸ πνεῦμα λέγει ταῖς ἐκκλησίαις.

II.—18. *And to the angel of the church at Thyatira, write; Thus saith the son of God, who hath eyes like a flame of fire, and his feet are like smelting brass.*

19. *I know thy works, and thy love, and faith, and*

V. 19. *And thy ministry.*—*Διακονίαν.* Understand *ministry toward the Church*, whether of *alms*, 2 Cor. ix. 12, or of *the word*, Acts vi. 4. This use of the term is frequent, 2 Cor. iii. 8, v. 18; Eph. iv. 12; Col. iv. 17; 2 Tim. iv. 5. *Service to God* is otherwise expressed, *λατρεύουσιν αὐτῷ*. "They serve him in his temple day and night. vii. 15.

- ministry, and thy patience ; and thy last
 20. works to be more than the first.—But I have
 against thee that thou sufferest thy woman
Jezebel ; who calleth herself a prophetess, and
 teacheth, and seduceth my servants to commit
 21. fornication, and to eat of idol sacrifices. And
 I have given her time that she might repent,
 but she has no will to repent of her fornication.—
 22 Behold, I will cast her into a bed ! and
 those who commit adultery with her into
 great affliction, unless they repent from her
 23 deeds. And her children will I slay with pesti-
 lence ; and all the churches shall know that I
 am he that searcheth the reins and hearts ;
 and I will give unto every one of you accord-
 24. ing to your works.—But to you I say, to the
 rest in *Thyatira*, as many as hold not this
 doctrine, whoever have not known the depths
 (as they call it) of Satan ; I will lay upon

V. 20. *Thou sufferest*.—Thou leavest without restraint. So ἄρτι is opposed to διακώλυνεν, Matt. iii. 14, 15. Grotius criticism on the reading of Arethas ἀφίνης can scarcely apply to the Greek of the Apocalypse.

V. 23. *With pestilence*.—Vitrina remarks, that in this book a marked distinction is to be observed between ἀποκτείναι ἐν θάνατῳ and ἀποκτείναι ἐν μακάριᾳ, xiii. 10. Wetstein's note is to the same effect. "By θάνατῳ is meant death by pestilence, as at vi. 8 ; Ezek. xiv. 19 ; Jer. xlv. 2, xlix. 22. Theodot." Schleusner, Num. 4, gives the sense of pestilence to Θάνατῳ in this place, and also in vi. 8. xviii. 8, and refers to the various passages in the Sept. for the same use of the word. Wakefield observes, that the Arabic translator was the only one who saw this. In our own language the pestilence used to be called *the mortality*.

V. 24. *Who hold not*.—See note ii. 1.

The depths (as they call it) of Satan.—By a slight transposition, I

25. *you no other burden. Only what you have, hold fast till I come.*
 26. *And he that overcometh, and keepeth my works unto the end, I will give him authority*
 27. *over the nations (And he shall rule them with a sceptre of iron, as the earthen vessels are broken all to shivers) as I also have re-*
 28. *ceived of my Father ; And I will give him*
 29. *the morning star.—He that hath an ear, let him hear what the spirit saith to the churches.*

COMMENT.

1. *The Proem*, v. 18.

1. *And to the angel of the church at Thyatira, write.*—It is not worth while in this place to

have endeavored to mark the sense. The Gnostics were wont by expressions of this kind to assume a sublimer order of attainments. “*Si bona fide quæras, concreto vultu, suspenso supercilio, altum est aiunt.*” Tertul. adv. Valent. c. 1. There are *divine* depths $\tau\acute{\alpha}\ \beta\acute{\alpha}\theta\eta$ $\tau\tilde{\epsilon}\ \Theta\tilde{\epsilon}\tilde{\omega}$. 1 Cor. ii. 10. But these were the depths *of Satan*. D. Stewart, Essay on the Sublime, philosophises on the use of this term $\beta\acute{\alpha}\theta\eta$ together with $\epsilon\psi\chi\omicron\varsigma$ as expressing two causes of similar emotions ; and Longinus, as he thinks, uses both to particularise two things comprehended under one common genus, corresponding to that expressed by the word *altitudo* in Latin. Longin. de Sub. § 2.

V. 27. *And he shall rule them.*—The reading of the Apocalypse corresponds with that of the Sept. and the Syriac both here and xii. 5 ; xix. 15.

As the earthen vessels are broken all to shivers.—The tense is present ; and, though it be a quotation from Ps. ii. 9, yet there also the allusion seems to be to the earthen vessels in which the sin-offering had been sodden, and which were commanded to be broken. Lev. vi. 28 ; xi. 33.

enter into a defence of the authority of this book against the objection of the Alogi. Epiphan. Hær. li. 33. Consult Lampe Prolog. in Johan. lib. i. c. 7. § 28. F. Stosch, Dissert. de Ecc. Thy. temp. Joan. Ap. existentia. It may be sufficient here to say, that the church at Thyatira was probably established very early, since Lydia, an early convert, resided there. Acts xvi. 14. Some have supposed the angel of this church to have been Irenæus, but the notion is refuted by Masuet. præf. p. lxxxix. Dr. Burton in loc. Thyatira was situated next to Pergamos on the East, and was addressed next in order because it was to be a type of the Holy Catholic Church of the fourth apocalyptic period—or *from the age of Luther to that memorable epoch, the revocation of the edict of Nantz.*

2. *Thus saith the Son of God, who hath eyes like a flame of fire, and his feet are like smelting brass.*—This is from the preceding description, i. 15, with this difference; that there he is described as “one like a Son of Man,” but here as “the Son of God.” Observe a similar substitution in the confession of Peter. Matt. xvi. 13-19. The reason of this seems to be, that in this epistle there is a particular reference to the second Psalm, in which *The Son* is his distinguishing title, and from which mainly the appellation of

The Son of God, so common in the New Testament, appears to have been derived. Ps. ii. 7, 12. (See Dr. J. P. Smyth, Script. Test. of Messiah, Bk. iii. chap. 3; capit. 1. together with the notes.) Most appropriate is this description to the argument of the epistle. With his eyes of flame, the Son of God searcheth the reins and hearts, v. 23. And with his feet of brass will he tread down the harlot and her paramours, as Jezebel of old was trodden under foot. v. 22. Comp. 2 Kings ix. 33.

II. *The Argument.* v. 19—25.

1. He first gives the character of this church, and begins with great commendation.

(1.) *I know thy works, and thy love, and ministry, and faith, and thy patience, and thy last works to be more than the first.* There is a general resemblance between the character of this church and that of the church at Ephesus, yet there is a marked distinction. At Ephesus the church first and last was resolutely opposed to all evil, whether in doctrine or discipline, although the latter part of her course was slackened by the remission of her former love. At Thyatira, although the latter part of her course was more distinguished than the beginning, yet

the church there was even at last, not sufficiently opposed to the evil she had to contend with.—How applicable this character was to *the church at Thyatira* cannot be questioned, though it is not known. With regard to the *Holy Catholic Church* of this period (that is during the era of the Reformation) it is most applicable to her, whether you contemplate her ministry of the word, (see note) her exemplary patience under persecution, or especially that distinguished feature, that her last works were more than the first. For, not to mention the glowing progress of the Reformation, the page of ecclesiastical history is marked about the close of the seventeenth century, or from 1655 to 1685 by an apparently systematic round of persecution, patiently endured in Piedmont, Poland, Silesia, Moravia, Hungary and France, while at the same time a fruitless effort to recover the fortress of the Church of England closed the period with a fresh volley of small arms (Bp. Gibson's *Preservative against Popery*, 3 vols. fol.) and our complete emancipation by the revolution. Yet the character of this church is not without fault.

(2.) *But I have against thee that thou sufferest thy woman Jezebel; who calleth herself a prophetess, and teacheth, and seduceth my servants*

to commit fornication, and to eat of idol sacrifices : and I have given her time that she might repent, but she has no will to repent of her fornication. What Balaam had been to *the whole house of Israel*, that Jezebel, King Ahab's Queen, was to *the ten tribes* after their separation ; nay more, for she seduced them to the worship of Baal and its sensual abominations, with all the aids of policy and power. His priests she patronized, and she murdered the prophets of the Lord. 1 Kings, xvi. 31 ; xvii. 4, 19, 22. Vitranga argues that she herself was, probably, a priestess of Baal. Jehu reproached her for her incantations ; something similar to which had been already attributed to Balaam. 2 Kings, ix. 22 ; Num. xxiv. 1. It is known that Ethbaal her father, the King of Zidon, was also the priest of Astarte, who was worshipped there together with her husband Baal. (1 Kg. xvi. 31 ; Jos. adv. App. lib. i.) The very name of Jezebel may allude, as Vitranga thinks, to her bearing a similar office. However that be, her death, it is certain, was the subject of an oracle. 1 Kg. xxi. 23 ; 2 Kg. ix. 30-37. First with regard to *the church at Thyatira* ; this expression, " thy woman Jezebel," must be understood in one of three ways. Either of some conspicuous individual who falsely pretended to the gift of prophecy, which was really possessed by some

females anciently. Acts xxi. 9. Or else, as Bede and Hammond, both after Arethas, would have it ; it is to be understood of the whole sect of the Nicolaitans, who are thus stigmatized by a new disgrace. Or lastly, uniting both these, it may be understood of the whole sect of the Nicolaitans ("her children," v. 23) patronized in that city by some conspicuous female, falsely pretending at the same time to the gift of prophecy. Considering how frequently in the early ages of Christianity women, being first deceived, afterwards became the coadjutors and tools of heresiarchs, the last exposition of the figure is probably the most correct. This was Tertullian's view of the passage. (*De pudic.* c. 19 ; *Jerom. ad. Ctesiphon.* 2 *Tim.* iii. 6, 7). The first Christian of Thyatira was a woman, whose name is known and honoured in all the churches ; but that of the false prophetess is forgotten—for it is improbable that Jezebel should be her proper name. An inscription discovered at Thyatira bore the name of Ulpia Marcella, the priestess of Diana ; but nothing more of her is known. (*Ricaut* 87). With regard to the *Holy Catholic Church*, the antitype of the ancient Jezebel in this period was the church of Rome, considered not in her priesthood only, of whom Balaam is the exclusive type, but in her totality, and in her pleni-

tude of policy and power. Her boast of infallibility, her corruption and her patronage of idolatry in the East as well as the West, and from first to last, stamp her for a Jezebel. Now, the blame imputed to the Holy Catholic Church of this period was not undeserved. Broken off from communion with Jezebel, they still left her at large, to deceive "my servants" saith the Lord. (Comp. xviii. 4). The progress of the Reformation, it is too well known to insist, was checked by the divisions and disputes of the reformed and evangelical churches about the sacraments, the ceremonies, and on grace. The Church of Christ had now obtained a vantage ground of which she did not avail herself to the utmost ; and therefore is a severer rebuke addressed to her in this period than in the last. (Comment. ii. 14).

2. Having given the character of this church, he subjoins (1) a *threat* against Jezebel and her adherents, wilful and incorrigible to the last ; and (2) a *promise* to the rest in Thyatira.

(1.) *Behold I will cast her into a bed ! and those who commit adultery with her into great affliction unless they repent from her works ; and her children will I slay with pestilence : and all the churches shall know that I am he that search-*

eth the reins and hearts ; and I will give unto every one of you according to your works.— From the couch of idolatrous festivity and shame (1 Sam. xxviii. 23. Esth. i. 6. Ezek. xviii. 41. Ames vi. 4.) he would “ throw her down !” like her ancient prototype. 2 Kg. ix, 33. Her paramours and her children should fall like the priests and the offspring of the literal Jezebel. (1 Kg. xviii. 40 ; 2 King i. 6, 16, 17 ; viii. 29 ; ix. 24 ; x. 10, 11 ; xi. 16, 18. How this threat was executed upon the Jezebel of *the church at Thyatira* is not upon record. The Jezebel of *the Holy Catholic Church* still “ sits a queen.” But her fate is decided, and in the sixth vision of this prophecy is recorded. Full-dressed shall she be thrown down. “ Here, I will shew thee the judgment of the great harlot who is seated upon the many waters ; with whom the kings of the earth have committed fornication, and the inhabitants of the earth have been made drunk with the wine of her fornication. xvii. 1, 2. In this passage the harlot answers to Jezebel—the kings of the earth who have committed fornication, to those who commit adultery—and the inhabitants of the earth who have drunk of her cup, to those who are here called her children. But “ upon her forehead (the harlot’s) her name was written ; Mystery, Babylon the Great, the Mother of Harlots.” xvii. 5. For

the death of her children by *pestilence*, compare this passage—"Because in her heart she saith I sit as a queen, and am no widow, and sorrow shall I never see ; therefore in one day shall her plagues come, *pestilence* and sorrow and famine ; and with fire shall she be burnt up, for mighty is the Lord God who judged her." xviii. 7, 8-10. And lo ! thus shall she be cast into a bed ! " And a certain mighty angel lifted up a stone, like a great mill-stone, and cast it into the sea, saying ; thus, with violence, shall Babylon, that great city, be hurled down and never more be found." xviii. 21. Such are the destinies of the of the apocalyptic Babylon, and *this is the internal evidence* which identifies her with the apocalyptic Jezebel. "And all the churches shall know"—the whole seven complete, met together and triumphant now (no longer perplexed by the prosperity of the wicked) shall know—that their Sovereign Lord the Son of God, with his eyes of flame, is the very searcher of all hearts, and fathoms all their depths. "These terms are borrowed from one of the most express assertions of the *exclusive* attribute of divine omniscience which occur in the whole volume of inspiration.—" Deceitful is the heart above all things, and it is deeply diseased ; who can know it ? I Jehovah, who search the heart, who try the reins, even to give every one accord-

ing to the fruit of his doings.” (Jer. xvii. 9, 10 ; xi. 20. Dr. J. P. Smith.) When he adds, “ And I will give unto every one of you according to your works,” Ps. lxii. 12, he turns and addresses his threat still to those his enemies, with whom immediately are contrasted the faithful in Thyatira.

(2.) *But to you I say, to the rest in Thyatira, as many as hold not this doctrine, whoever have not known the depths (as they call it) of Satan ; I will lay upon you no other burden, only that which you have hold fast till I come.*”—The Gnostics, branded in these epistles by the name of Nicolaitans, boasted of a profounder science than common men. That it was *a depth* was a phrase with them. (See note. Iren. Hær. i. 1. Tertull. adv. Valent. c. i.) But they were the depths of Satan, says our Lord, and not of God. 1 Cor. ii. 10. (Rome too has her esoteric doctrine, and her depths.) To those who held not this doctrine, a promise is made of laying upon them no other *burden*. Precepts enforcing oppressive *duties* are in the New Testament called burdens. Matt. xxiii. 4 Acts, xv. 28. In the Old Testament oracles of God which foretell heavy *judgments* are called burdens. Isai. xiii. 1 ; xv. 1 ; xvii. 1 ; Mal. i. 1. There may even be an allusion here to a particular passage in the

history of Jezebel and Ahab. "For remember how that when I and thou rode together after Ahab his father, the Lord laid this *burden* upon him." 2 Kings ix. 25. In this last sense Beza takes it. It is a promise, not to exempt them from *persecution*, which they were already suffering, (for that is implied in the use of the word ὑπομονή, *patient expectation of relief*, which is common to this epistle with those to Ephesus and Philadelphia, v. 19, 2; iii. 10,) but to save them from the *destruction* just before threatened. Their enemies should perish, but so should not they. With regard to *the church at Thyatira*, as we know nothing of the execution of the former threat, we can know nothing of any escape from it. With regard to *the Holy Catholic Church*, we have already seen that when the Lord shall wage war against the adherents of the harlot, some shall not only escape, but even have a share in his victory, xvii. 14; xix. 17-21. He immediately adds, "Only that which you have, hold fast until I come." Here, let it be well observed, that for the first time he mentions his coming *without condition or reserve*. To Ephesus he says, "*Repent, or else* I will come to thee quickly." ii. 5. It is merely a threat, and that a conditional one. To Smyrna he neither threatens nor mentions his coming. To Pergamos again, as to Ephesus, he says, "*Repent, or*

else I will come to thee." It is a threat with a reserve. But here to Thyatira, there is indeed a threat against Jezebel, her paramours, and her children, but to the rest in Thyatira none; and yet, his coming is mentioned, not threatened, as a certain event. It is a prediction, without qualification, $\alpha\chi\rho\iota\varsigma\ \tilde{\upsilon}\ \alpha\nu\ \eta'\xi\phi$. This remark applies no less to all the remaining epistles. Now, since whatever is included in the argument of each epistle is addressed to the church as a community, it certainly follows that the Thyatiran church is addressed as about to survive till the Lord come. *The Holy Catholic Church* reformed will so survive; and there still exists a church *at Thyatira*. Not only the plain of Thyatira is still celebrated for its fertility, its dyes are famous and form an article of commerce still, but a community of Christians still survives flourishing at least in numbers. (See Mr. Hartley's Testimony, Comment ii. 10.)

III. *The Epilogue.* v. 26-29.

1. *He that overcometh and keepeth my works unto the end.*—In the three first epistles the command of attention precedes the promise: in this, and in all the four last epistles, that order is reversed. By this significant change a broad hint is given, that the seven epistles are divided

into two classes ; the three first are tied together, and the four last. Nor is this all ; for this clause, “ *and keepeth my words unto the end,*” is peculiar to this single epistle, which stands at the head of the latter series. Now there is no idle clause in the Apocalypse. It points to that apocalyptic end or goal, the coming of the Lord and his reign of a thousand years. xiv. 13, 14 ; xix. 11-16 ; xx. 4-6. It confirms also the preceding remark (Comment ii. 25), that in the four last epistles the coming of the Lord is not threatened with a reserved condition, but predicted as a certain event. It implies moreover that *individuals* (for the epilogues are not addressed to the Church as a community) of a genuine Thyatiran spirit will be found until the end *keeping his works* ; that is, renouncing their own works, and devoted to those which the Lord has commanded. Heb. iv. 10 ; John vi. 28, 29 ; 2 Cor. v. 15. The promise itself is two-fold.

(1.) *I will give him authority over the nations (and he shall rule them with a sceptre of iron, as the earthen vessels are broken all to shivers) as I also have received of my father.*—This is a direct quotation from Psalm ii. 9. As *the Son of God*, according to the Proem of this epistle he has *regal* authority ; “ thou art *the Son of*

God, thou art *the King* of Israel," John i. 49. He had himself received from the Father a kingdom, and he will share it with his own. Dan. vii. 27; Luke xii. 29; Matt. xix. 28. 1 Cor. vi. 23. The nations, as contrasted with the Israel of God, shall be shivered by the kingdom of priests, like the earthen vessels in which the sin-offering had been sodden; which when they are in the potter's hand are made as to him seems good, but when they are once broken can never be made whole again. Lev. vi. 28; xi. 33; 2 Tim. ii. 21; Jer. xviii. 4; xix. 11. This promise, given to confirm his people in opposition to Jezebel, that harlot who boasts herself a queen, (xviii. 7) points forward to the latter victories of the prophecy, which shall be common to the Lord and his people. "And she brought forth a male child, who should one day rule all the nations with a sceptre of iron." xii. 5. And the armies in heaven followed him upon white horses, clothed in fine linen pure white. And out of his mouth proceeded a sharp weapon, that with it he might smite the nations, and he shall rule them with a sceptre of iron." xix. 14, 15.

(2.) *And I will give him the morning star.*—The Lord declares himself to be "the bright, the morning star." xxii. 16. By the mouth of Balaam himself was his coming, so long ago,

foretold with this very combination of an iron sceptre, and of a morning star ; but first *the star*, and then the sceptre of “ *the sun* of righteousness.” (Mal. iv. 2 ; Rev. xxi. 23 ; xxii. 5). “ I shall see him, but not now ; I shall behold him, but not nigh. There shall come *a star* out of Jacob, and *a sceptre* shall rise out of Israel, and shall smite through the princes of Moab, and destroy all the children of Sheth.” (Num. xxiv. 17. Comp. 2 Sam. xxiii. 3-5. A star (the symbol of an angel of the church, i. 10) was the sign given at his first coming ; but a star unlike all others. (Ignat. ad. Eph. § 19 ; John i. 9 ; Luke ii. 32). A star may be the sign of his second coming. A sign there shall be. “ And then shall appear *the sign* of the Son of Man in heaven. And then shall all the tribes of the earth mourn, and they shall see the Son of Man coming in the clouds of heaven, with power and great glory.” Matt. xxiv. 30. Peter exhorts the church to take heed to the prophetic word, as to a lamp shining in a dark place until the day dawn, and the morning-star arise in your hearts.” 2 Pet. i. 19. Upon which Mac Knight remarks : “ Our Lord calls himself ‘ the bright and morning-star.’ Rev. xxii. 6 ; because when he comes from heaven to judge the world, being surrounded with the glory of the Father, that bright light, at a great distance, will have the appear-

ance of a star ; which he termed *the morning-star*, because it will usher in the day of judgment. This star the apostle represents as rising in men's breasts, because its appearance will produce in their hearts the fullest conviction of the truth of all Christ's promises." (See Mac Knight in loc.) It may be remarked that the Hebrew word for *host* צֶבֶא, which is derived from a verb signifying to *shine forth*, is primarily used for the *morning-star*, and secondarily for *a host marching to the field*. (Robertson's Clavis, Gen. ii. 1 ed. Kinghorn.) Victorinus, Ansbertus, Brightman, Daubuz, Lacunza, and others, have understood the promise here of the first resurrection, when the saints shall join the celestial host, now rising like the morning-star upon the benighted world. To give one the morning-star then, will be to give him an early participation in the glory of the Lord in the very dawn of his kingdom. His kingdom of glory begins from that early date, as his kingdom of grace began with the predicted Elijah. Matt. xi. 12 ; Mark i. 1 ; Luke xvi. 16.

2. *He that hath an ear let him hear, what the Spirit saith to the churches.*

If there be any prophetic allusion in the name of this city, Thyatira, it can be only, as before,

to the prediction in the argument, of the future external condition of the church. There is, however, but one positive prediction in the argument, and that refers to the fall of Jezebel, and the affliction of her paramours and children. That *affliction* is “the great banquet of God—*his great sacrifice.*” Ezek. xxxix. 17; Zeph. i. 7. “And I saw an angel standing in the sun; and he cried with a loud voice, saying to all the fowls that fly in the mid-heaven; Here, flock together to the great banquet of God; that ye may eat the flesh of kings, and the flesh of captains, and the flesh of mighty men, and the flesh of horses, and of those that sit upon them; even the flesh of all, both free men and slaves, both small and great. xix. 17, 18. (See Comment ii. 22, 23.) *At that great day some of the church shall assist.* “These shall wage war with the Lamb; but the Lamb shall obtain the victory over them (for he is Lord of lords, and King of kings,) and they that are with him—called and chosen and faithful.” xvii. 14; comp. xix. 14. This state of victory may be signified by the word Thyatira, which may be resolved into *Θύα τεύρειν* to slay the victims.

—— Τείροντο δὲ πολλοὶ χαλκῶ

“Ὅσσοι ἄριστοι ἔσαν. Iliad Δ. Compare Isai viii. 1.

THE EPISTLE TO SARDIS.

- III.—1 Καὶ τῷ ἀγγέλῳ τῆς ἐν Σάρδεσιν ἐκκλησίας
γράφον· τάδε λέγει ὁ ἔχων τὰ ἑπτὰ πνεύ-
ματα τῷ Θεῷ, καὶ τῷ ἑπτὰ ἀσέρας·
- Οἶδα σε τὰ ἔργα, ὅτι ὄνομα ἔχεις ὅτι ζῆς,
2 καὶ νεκρὸς εἶ. Γίνε γρηγορῶν, καὶ στήρισον τὰ
λοιπὰ, ἃ ἐμελλον ἀποθανεῖν· ἔ γὰρ εὔρηκά
σε τὰ ἔργα πεπληρωμένα ἐνώπιον τῷ Θεῷ
- 3 μ. Μνημόνευε ἔν, πῶς εἵληφας καὶ ἤκω-
σας, καὶ τήρει, καὶ μετανοήσον. Ἐὰν ἔν μὴ
γρηγορήσης, ἦξω ἐπὶ σε ὡς κλέπτis, καὶ ἔ
- 4 μὴ γνῶς, ποῖαν ὥραν ἦξω ἐπὶ σε. Ἀλλ' ἔχεις
ὀλίγα ὀνόματα ἐν Σάρδεσιν, ἃ ἔκ ἐμόλυναν
τὰ ἱμάτια αὐτῶν· καὶ περιπατήσῃ μετ'
ἐμῷ ἐν λευκοῖς ὅτι ἄξιοι εἰσιν.
- 5 Ὁ νικῶν, ἔστος περιβαλεῖται ἐν ἱματίοις λευ-
κοῖς· καὶ ἔ μὴ ἐξαλείψω τὸ ὄνομα αὐτοῦ ἐκ
τῆς βίβλῃ τῆς ζωῆς, καὶ ὁμολογήσω τὸ ὄνο-
μα αὐτοῦ ἐνώπιον τῷ πατρός μ, καὶ ἐνώπιον

6 τῶν ἀγγελῶν αὐτῶ. Ὁ ἔχων ὄψις, ἀκυσάτω,
τί τὸ πνεῦμα λέγει ταῖς ἐκκλησίαις.

III.—1. *And to the angel of the church at Sardis, write: Thus saith he that hath the seven spirits of God, and the seven stars.*

I know thy works, that thou hast the name of

2. *being alive, but thou art dead.—Be vigilant, and strengthen the remnant which were ready to die; for I have not found thy works perfect*

3. *before my God. Remember therefore how thou hast received, and heard, and keep it, and repent.—But if thou wilt not watch, I will come upon thee as a thief, and thou shalt in no wise know at what hour I will come upon*

4. *thee.—Thou hast however a few names at Sardis which have not defiled their garments; and they shall walk about with me in white, for they are worthy.*

V. 2. *Perfect*.—Πεπληρωμένα. “Satisfactory, i. e. answering to the measure which God requires.” Dr. Burton in loc.

V. 4. *In white*.—This expression ἐν λευκοῖς is peculiar to John xx. 12, where it is applied to the garments of the heavenly angels. Ἰματίοις is added a little below, v. 5. Laodicea is counselled to buy *white garments*, ἱματία λευκά. iii. 18. The twenty-four elders are clothed in *white garments*, ἱματίοις λευκοῖς. iv. 4. These terms must be distinguished from others. A *white robe* was given to the souls below the altar, σοὴ λευκή. vi. 11. The palm-bearing multitude were clothed with *white robes*, σοὰς λευκάς. vii. 9. A third expression is used—The bride was “arrayed in *fine linen* bright and pure,” βύσσινον λαμπρὸν καὶ καθαρὸν. xix. 8. The armies in heaven also were “clothed in *fine linen* pure—white,” βύσσινον λευκὸν καθαρὸν. xix. 14. The true exposition depends upon a careful observation of these distinctions.

5. *He that overcometh, the same shall be clothed in white garments ; and I will in no wise blot out his name from the book of life, but I will acknowledge his name before my father,*
 6. *and before his angels.—He that hath an ear, let him hear what the spirit saith to the churches.*

COMMENT.

1. *The Proem, v. 1.*

1. *And to the angel of the Church at Sardis, write.*—Sardis was situated next to Thyatira, on the South-east. The church at Sardis was addressed next in order, because it was to be a type of the Holy Catholic Church during the fifth apocalyptic period, *from the revocation of the edict of Nantz to the æra of the British and Foreign Bible Society.*

2. *Thus saith he that hath the seven spirits of God, and the seven stars.*—This partly refers to the preceding description, i. 4, 16, and partly anticipates a succeeding vision, in which he sees “a lamb standing as if it had been sacrificed, having seven horns and seven eyes, which

V. 5. *Shall be clothed.*—The passive sense is adopted here to convey the idea of an honor not so much won as conferred ; as afterwards it is said of the bride, “and to her it was given to be arrayed in fine linen.” xix. 8.

are the seven spirits of God sent forth into all the earth.” v. 6. (In plain language the Spirit of Christ. Comp. Jo. xv. 26 ; Rom. viii. 9 ; 1 Cor. xii. 3 ; Gal. iv. 6 ; 1 Pet. i. 1). “And seven torches of fire were burning before his throne, which are the seven spirits of God.” iv. 5. This title is most appropriate to the argument of the epistle, which is occupied in a severe censure of the angel and of the church at Sardis. It was an expiring light. The title assumed in the epistle to Ephesus is very similar. “Thus saith he who holdeth the seven stars in his right hand ; who walketh about in the midst of the seven golden lamp-stands.” ii. 1. He only who first lighted those lamps can trim and revive them.

II. *The Argument*, v. 1-4.

1. He begins with the main body of this church, and (1) inflicts upon them, in the person of their angel, a severe censure ; which (2) he concludes with a threat.

(1.) *I know thy works. that thou hast the name of being alive, but thou art dead. Be vigilant, and strengthen the remnant which were ready to die ; for I have not found thy works perfect before my God. Remember therefore how thou*

hast received and heard, and keep it and repent. Balaam and Jezebel are heard of no more. It is here no longer a question of conflict, but of life. This censure is especially directed against the angel of the church as a negligent shepherd. "The diseased have ye not strengthened, neither have ye healed that which was sick." Ezek. xxxiv. 4, 15. Before men he might have the reputation of spiritual life, but before God his works (the only test) were "not perfect;" it is implied that they were extremely defective. Comp. 1 Kg. xi. 4; xv. 3. He had forgotten how he had received, or what (πῶς for πῶτα Beza) namely the apostolic doctrine. Whether this censure were applicable to *the church at Sardis* cannot be called in question. Sardis, the ancient seat of Cræsus, was proverbial for its wealth; but wealth is a fertile source of temptation. And it may be remarked, by the way, that the state of this church is a proof that the Catholic Church of the apostolic age was not so spotless in every part as we are apt to conceive it. Indeed of all the seven churches only two are described as blameless, Smyrna and Philadelphia; and of the rest, Sardis and Laodicea are described as most reproachable. With regard to *the Holy Catholic Church* of this period (from the revocation of the edict of Nantz to the æra of the Bible Society), this censure

was but too applicable to it. There was a sound-
ing reputation before man both for genius and
learning, but there was a general defect both in
doctrine and discipline. They had forgotten
the doctrine they had received from the apos-
tles and from the reformers. I cannot give a
more summary comment upon this passage than
in the very words of the late Dr. Buchanan, in a
sermon preached at Cambridge. "The light of
divine truth continued to shine in the Protestant
Church for a long period, with some intermis-
sion indeed, and in certain churches more in-
tensely than in others; but it shone in some
places as brightly, and probably as long, as ever
it did in any period of the primitive Church.
At length, however, by the combined operation
of causes which are well known, a spirit of in-
difference to religious truth began to mani-
fest itself, not only in the established and
national churches, but among all other de-
nominations of Christians. It is difficult to
say where there was most apathy and lan-
guor. For though the form of sound words
was generally retained (in our own church
in a written form, in other churches in an
extempore form), and there were some emi-
nent examples of piety and zeal; yet it was
most evident that in many places religion was
sinking very fast into *a lifeless profession, and*

that in some places it merely exhibited the body and external figure. Out of this state of things arose a new enemy to the church, the enemy that might be expected—infidelity.” These are the remarks of an intelligent observer standing at a sufficient distance of time to give a summary of the facts. But I may add that Lampe and Gill, at the very time, perceived that they were living in the Sardian period of the Apocalypse. (See Gill in loc. and Lampe fragment. in Apoc.)—After this severe censure and admonition he subjoins a threat.

(2.) *But if thou wilt not watch, I will come upon thee as a thief, and thou shalt in no wise know at what hour I will come upon thee.*—As the commendation or blame awarded to these churches exhibits their character, so the threat or promise relates their destiny. The threat here is not of the coming of the Lord, but of *the manner of his coming*. Coming he is, and if the church at Sardis watch not, upon her he will come *as a thief*. Our Lord had already used this image, in his great prophetic discourse, concerning his second personal advent. Matt. xxiv. 43. The Apostles had already repeated it. 1 Thess. v. 2. 2 Pet. iii. 10. To the unwatchful he would come, to their surprise and alarm : whereas to those who wisely watched he

would come *as a bridegroom*. Matt. xxv. 1. Luke xii. 35—40. First with regard to *the church at Sardis*, we have already met with several instances where the fulfilment of the prophecy in the first sense could not be verified through default of ecclesiastical history ; but in this instance it must be acknowledged, that as we have here a predictive threat of the personal coming of our Lord *with terror*, it can only have an application to the liberal church at Sardis in the event of such a church being in existence at that period. Should there even be no literal church at Sardis at that period, this would be only one instance among many of a general rule ; that in prophecies of a double sense, some expressions are purposely used, which not being at all, or very imperfectly fulfilled in the first sense, compel the believer to look forward to their fulfilment in the second.—With regard then to *the Holy Catholic Church*, we have already seen (Comment ii. 25.) that the four last epistles are classed together, and that not only some few *individuals* of a Thyatiran spirit, but that a *community* of a Thyatiran spirit, will be found remaining to the end of this dispensation when our Lord shall come : for whatever is included in the *argument* of each epistle refers to the church as a community. Here again it appears that a community of a Sardian spirit

will be found remaining until that period. It follows that the Holy Catholic Church is predicted as remaining, partly in the spirit which prevailed during the period of the *Reformation*, and partly in the spirit which prevailed during the period of its *relapse*. This is confirmed, with regard to Sardis, by *internal evidence*, a distinct link connecting this epistle with a subsequent vision. "Behold, I come as a thief. Blessed is he that watcheth and keepeth his garments, lest he walk naked and they see his shame." xvi. 15. This passage reflects a light upon our text ; for, as Vitranga observes (from Lightfoot Tom. ii. p. 129) this is a plain allusion to a custom observed under the last temple. The temple was watched in three different places by three companies of priests ; and in twenty-one other places by twenty-one companies of Levites, consisting of ten men each. At peep of dawn the præfect of the temple stood and knocked at one of the doors where a company of the priests kept watch. Thence proceeding on his rounds, whom he found not watching he either branded by burning, or exposed by *taking away their garments—as a thief*. (Maimon. in Hilco. Beth Hableechim viii. § 11. Apud Lampe in Ps. cxxx. 6.)

2. Having done with the main body of this

church, he passes on to a select few among them, whom he honors (1) with his approbation, and (2) with his promise.

(1.) *Thou hast, however, a few names at Sardis which have not defiled their garments.*—He adheres to his last image of a priest on watch. These few *persons* (for that is all which is necessarily intended by *names*, Acts i. 15 ; Rev. xi. 13 ; Num. iii. 40, 43) were, it is insinuated, known and numbered to honor. Of *the church at Sardis* we know no more than what the epistle tells us ; but for *the Holy Catholic Church* of this period, it is certain that there were some eminent and honored examples of piety and zeal ; on the Continent, among the Pietists and the Moravian Brethren, besides other more illustrious individuals, Vitranga for instance ; and in Great Britain, besides others, the authors of our revival, men ever to be named with honor, Whitfield, Wesley, the Erskines, and their first followers. He adds his promise.

(2.) *And they shall walk about with me in white, for they are worthy.*—Compare Zec. iii. 1-7, where, after Joshua the High Priest has the filthy garments taken from him, and he is clothed with change of raiment, he is thus ad-

dressed: "If thou wilt walk in my ways, and if thou wilt keep my charge, then thou shalt also judge my house, and shalt also keep my courts, and *I will give thee places to walk among those that stand by.*" The priests of the temple were not allowed to minister except in garments spotless and white. But the allusion here is probably to a particular custom. The priests upon their examination before the Sanhedrim as to the purity of their genealogy, or of its transmission if they were married, Lev. xxi. 7, were clad, if they passed the examination, in white garments, and were led forth, amid the acclamations of their brethren, to celebrate a festive day; if they did not pass, they were dismissed in black attire. (See L'Empereur in Middoth, c. vi. § 3; Lightfoot Temple Service, c. vii. § 1; xviii. § 11; xxxvii. § 5, 11; Mede's Works, p. 909). Let it be observed that this promise is to be distinguished from the subsequent promise in the epilogue to *individuals*: being in the argument it belongs to *the church* in its corporate capacity, and yet not to the whole of it, but to a select band, "a few names." That part of the church should partake of the honor foretold in a subsequent vision. "To the bride it was given to be arrayed *in fine linen, bright and pure*; for the fine linen is the righteousness of the saints." xix. 8. The bride

is evidently the same as those who immediately after appear. "And the armies in heaven followed him upon white horses, clothed in *fine linen, pure white.*" xix. 14; Comp. Zec. xiv. 5; 1 Thess. iv. 17. They that had not defiled their garments by sin should walk in righteousness; and in what sense they are "worthy" is plain; for "they have washed their robes and made them white *in the blood of the lamb.*" vii. 14.

III. *The Epilogue*, v. 5, 6.

1. The promise is two-fold.

(1.) *He that overcometh, the same shall be clothed in white garments.*—Here the same promise is made to *individuals* of every period which had just before been made to a particular part of *the church* at Sardis.

(2.) *And I will in no wise blot out his name out of the book of life; but I will acknowledge his name before my father, and before his angels.*—The book of life is a figure originally used, in the sacred volume, at Exod. xxxii. 32, 33, and frequently afterwards adopted. Dan. xii. 1; Rev. xiii. 8. ("*Bonos in aliis tabulis exscriptos habet.*" Plaut, prolog. in Rud.) But the allusion here is still to the priests and their

genealogies. (Ezra ii. 62 ; Neh. vii. 64 ; Jos. adv. Apion. Selden de Successu in Pont. ii. 2, 3). Not to blot out of the book of life, is explained by what follows ; his name shall be publicly proclaimed out of that roll before all. The promise points to the great white throne, before which the book of life shall be opened. " And I saw a great white throne, and him that sat upon it, from whose face the earth and the heaven fled away, and there was found no place for them. And I saw the dead, small and great, standing before the throne ; and books were opened. And another, the book of life, was opened. And the dead were judged out of the things written in the books, according to their works." xx. 11, 12 ; Comp. Matt. x. 32 ; xxv. 31. How appropriate is this promise ! Their names were few, and not honorable among men (human honors belonged to those who had a name to live but were dead) but before God, the reverse shall be the case.

2. *He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith to the churches.*

If there be any prophetic allusion in the name of this city, Sardis, it is to the prediction in the argument of the external honor which shall be conferred on the select few which belongs to the

church at Sardis, of walking about with the Lord in the pure garments of an undefiled priesthood. xvi. 15 ; xix. 8, 14. The first, in the first row, of the precious stones in the breastplate of the high priest, was a *Sardius* (Σάρδιον lxx. Exod. xxviii. 17). Grotius adopted the idea of an allusion to the gem, though in another sense, and without reference to the sacred breastplate.

THE EPISTLE TO PHILADELPHIA.

- III.—7 Καὶ τῷ ἀγγέλῳ τῆς ἐν Φιλαδελφείᾳ ἐκκλησίας γράψον· τάδε λέγει ὁ ἅγιος, ὁ ἀληθινός, ὁ ἔχων τὴν κλεῖν τῷ Δαβίδ· ὁ ἀνοίγων, καὶ ὀδεῖς κλείει· καὶ κλείει, καὶ ὀδεῖς ἀνοίγει.
- 8 Οἶδά σε τὰ ἔργα· ἰδὲ, δέδωκα ἐνώπιον σε θύραν ἀνεωγμένην ἣν ὀδεῖς δύναται κλειῖσαι αὐτήν· Ὅτι μικρὰν ἔχεις δύναμιν, καὶ ἐτήρησάς με τὸν λόγον, καὶ ἐκ ἡρνήσω τὸ ὄνομα
- 9 με· Ἰδὲ, δίδωμι ἐκ τῆς συναγωγῆς τῷ Σατανᾷ (τῶν λέγοντων ἑαυτοὺς Ἰσδαίους εἶναι, καὶ ἐκ εἶσιν, ἀλλὰ ψεύδονται) ἰδὲ, ποιήσω αὐτοὺς, ἵνα ἤξωσι καὶ προσκυνήσωσιν ἐνώπιον τῶν ποδῶν σε, καὶ γυνώσκῃς, ὅτι ἐγὼ ἠγάπησά
- 10 σε. Ὅτι ἐτήρησας τὸν λόγον τῆς ὑπομονῆς με, καὶ γὰρ σε τηρήσω ἐκ τῆς ὥρας τῷ πειρασμῷ τῆς μελλούσης ἔρχεσθαι ἐπὶ τῆς οἰκουμένης ὅλης, πειράσαι τοὺς κατοικοῦντας ἐπὶ

τῆς γῆς. Ἐρχομαι ταχύ· κράτει ὃ ἔχεις,
ἵνα μηδεὶς λάβῃ τὸν στέφανον σε.

- 12 Ὁ νικῶν, ποιήσω αὐτὸν σῦλον ἐν τῷ ναῷ τῷ
Θεῷ μου, καὶ ἔξω ὃ μὴ ἐξέλθῃ ἔτι· καὶ
γράψω ἐπ' αὐτὸν τὸ ὄνομά τῷ Θεῷ μου, καὶ
τὸ ὄνομα τῆς πόλεως τῷ Θεῷ μου, (τῆς καινῆς
Ἰερουσαλὴμ, ἡ καταβαίνουσα ἐκ τοῦ ὕψους
ἀπὸ τοῦ Θεοῦ μου,) καὶ τὸ ἔνομά μου τὸ
13 καινόν. Ὁ ἔχων ὧς, ἀκουσάτω, τί τὸ πνεῦμα
λέγει ταῖς ἐκκλησίαις.

III.—7. *And to the angel of the church at Philadelphia, write : Thus saith the Holy One, the True, he that hath the key of David—who openeth and none shutteth, and shutteth and none openeth,*

8. *I know thy works ; Behold, I have set before*

V. 7. *The key of David.*—Wakefield has rendered this, “He that hath the key, *the son of David* ;” and is astonished that no one before him had discovered the true construction, although there were so many instances of it in Luke iii. But the following clause being a quotation verbatim from Isai. xxii. 22, it is obvious that *the key of David* is used for the key of *the house of David*, in the same manner as *the mountain of the Lord* is used for the mountain of *the house of the Lord*. Isai. ii. 3 ; Mic. iv. 2. The matter of astonishment is rather that Wakefield himself should not have adopted the opinion of Drusus : “Ellipsis est si non nota tamen certa, et indubitata, de qua ne Carneades quidem, si viveret, dubitaret.”

V. 8. *Because*—Ὅτι might be connected with the preceding clause, according to the punctuation of Griesbach, as the cause of

- thee an open door, and none can shut it.—Because thou hast a little strength, and hast kept my word, and not denied my name ;*
9. *Behold, I will give thee out of the Synagogue of Satan (who call themselves Jews and are not, but they lie), Behold, I will make them to come and do homage at thy feet, and they*
10. *shall know that I have loved thee.—Because thou hast kept the word of my patience, I also will keep thee out of that hour of trial which is about to come upon the whole world, to try the*
11. *inhabitants of the earth. I am coming quickly : Hold fast what thou hast, that no one take thy crown.*
12. *He that ocercometh, I will make him a pillar in the temple of my God, and from it shall he never more be cast out ; and I will write upon him the name of my God, and the name of the*

the privilege of having a door set open before them. But since that privilege is followed by two promises, the latter of which is clearly introduced by ὅτι , the style of the epistle seems to require that the former promise also should be introduced by ὅτι . The cause of both promises is the same, namely that they had kept his word.

V. 8. *A little strength.*—I have preferred keeping the common English version, in order to preserve the decorum of the epistolary style ; the angel of the church being always addressed as the representative of his church. Yet I doubt not but the idea intended to be conveyed is, that this church was inconsiderable for numbers. Grotius renders it, “*modicam habes ecclesiam*,” and Daubuz, Wetstein, and Eichhorn follow him. The same term is frequently used for *host* in the Sept. καὶ πᾶσα δύναμις τῆ ἑρανὲ παρῆσθκει ἐκ δεξιῶν αὐτῆς. 2 Par. xviii. 18 ; Num. ii. 4 ; Exod. vi. 26. So *vis hominum* in Latin.

V. 12. *And from it shall he never more be cast out.*—The same word is elsewhere used in the passive sense. Μήτις ὁ λύχνος ἐρίχεται. Is a lamp brought to be put under a bushel ? Mark iv. 21. Τῷτο τὸ

city of my God ; (the new Jerusalem, which is coming down out of Heaven from my God)
 13. *and my name, my new one.—He that hath an ear, let him hear what the spirit saith to the churches.*

COMMENT.

I. *The Proem, v. 7.*

1. *And to the angel of the church at Philadelphia write.—*Philadelphia was situated at no great distance from Sardis to the South-east. The church at Philadelphia was addressed next because it was to be a type of the Holy Catholic Church, during the sixth apocalyptic period, or during the æra of the British and Foreign Bible Society (which is commensurate with the REVIVAL of the Church in its reformed state) until the beginning of a second RELAPSE, from whatever epoch that relapse may hereafter appear to be dated.

2. *Thus saith the Holy One, the True, He that hath the key of David, who openeth and none shutteth, and shutteth and none openeth.*

γένος ἐν ᾧ δυνάται ἐξελεῖν. This kind can be cast out by nothing but by prayer and fasting. Mark ix. 29. Conversely Ἐκκληθήσονται εἰς τὸ σκότος, Matt. viii. 12, is, in the Syriac, *they shall go out into darkness*; for in the Syriac the same word signifies both to go out, and to be cast out.

These characteristics could not literally enter into the description of the person of our Lord ; though figuratively his holiness must have done, since he appeared in the attire of a high priest, on whose mitre was engraven *Holiness to the Lord*. Exod. xxviii. 36. In the apostle's preface he is called "that faithful witness." i. 5. And in our Lord's exposition of the introductory hieroglyphic, he says that "he has the keys of death and of hell." i. 18. Like that passage in the apostle's preface there is a reference here to the offices of our Lord ; the priest, prophet, and king of his church : *The Holy One* is the peculiar characteristic of God himself. "To whom then will ye liken me, or shall I be equal? saith *The Holy One*." Isai. xl. 25. Comp. Is. vi. 3 ; Rev. iv. 8. But here it is "God manifest in the flesh," the high priest of our profession. Exod. xxviii. 38. Comp. Ps. xvi. 10 ; Dan. ix. 24 ; Luke i. 35 ; Acts iii. 14. Again, *he that is True*, or the True One, is God himself, for so he proclaimed himself ; "the Lord God—abundant in goodness and *truth*." Exod. xxxiv.. 6. But here it is "God manifest in the flesh," the truth itself. John xiv. 6. The prophet like unto Moses. Deut xviii. 18. "And Moses verily was *faithful* in all his house as a servant, for a testimony of those things which were to be spoken after, but Christ as a Son over

his own house." Heb. iii. 1-6. Comp. Rev. i. 5; iii. 14; vi. 10; xv. 3; xvi. 7; xix. 2-11; xxii. 6. Lastly, his regal office was before expressed by his having *the keys* of death and of hell, or the power of life and death, which is the proper attribute of the only God. (See Comment, i. 18.) But here as "God manifest in the flesh," he is said to have the key of David, our king; which is in effect the same power, with an especial adaptation to the argument of this epistle, v. 8. The key was the emblem of official power, whether sacred or civil. In shape it was like a reaper-hook, and was laid, as a reaper lays his sickle, over the shoulder. See Isai. ix. 6; xxii. 22; from which the passage is quoted. The key of David is the key of the house of David. In the reign of Hezekiah, who was of the line of David, Shebna, the type of abused authority, is excluded from the presidency of the royal palace with threats of the wrath of God; and Eliakim, the type of our Lord, is substituted in his place. 2 King xviii. 18. Although not a servant, but a son, our Lord exercises a delegated power in his own house. Heb. iii. 5; Matt. xxviii. 18. In particular he has the key of knowledge, and to whom he will he entrusts it. Luke xi. 52; Matt. xvi. 14.

II. *The Argument*, v. 8-11.

Like Smyrna, Philadelphia is treated as a blameless church ; in both there is a synagogne of Satan, yet both have crowns ; but the promises abound in this epistle beyond those in any other. 1. he defines their privilege, and 2. adds his repeated approbation.

1. *I know thy works ; behold, I have set before thee an open door, and none can shut it.*—Twenty men were required to shut the gate of the temple. Jos. contr. Apion, ii. 9. ap. Ottii Spicel. But the figure implies a great opportunity for preaching the Gospel. 1 Cor. xvi. 9 ; 2 Cor. ii. 12 ; Acts xiv. 27. Comp. Isai. lvi. 5 ; Eph. ii. 13-19. In spite of human opposition, they should have such an opportunity. In what manner this was the peculiar privilege of *the church at Philadelphia* we have no information beyond this epistle. With regard to *the Holy Catholic Church* of this period (or during the æra of the British and Foreign Bible Society, until that epoch shall arrive when this door shall be closed), how great the privilege is which she has enjoyed, both the history of that society (see Owen's Hist. of Bib. Society) and the annual reports of kindred institutions of every kind, among all denominations all over Chris-

tendom, furnish the most ample evidence. The dead weight of the Sardinian spirit, and the scorn of the scorner ; the bull of the Pope and the firmaun of the Porte have equally been opposed to it in vain. War itself has been stilled before the heralds of peace—" *claudentur Belli portæ.*"

(2.) His approbation and promises are twice repeated.

(1.) *Because thou hast a little strength, and hast kept my word, and not denied my name ; Behold, I will give thee out of the synagogue of Satan (who call themselves Jews and are not, but they lie). Behold, I will make them to come and do homage at thy feet, and they shall know that I have loved thee.*—First let it be observed, that the promise to this church resembles that to Zion. Isai. lx. 11. 14. There, after he had said, "*thy gates shall be open continually ; they shall not be shut day nor night, that they may bring unto thee the forces of the Gentiles* (*δυνάμειν ἔθνων*. lxx.) and that their Kings may be brought."—it is added ; " the sons also of them that afflicted thee shall come bending unto thee ; and all they that despised thee *shall bow themselves down at the soles of thy feet ;* and they shall call thee the city of the Lord, the Zion of the Holy One of

Israel.” The whole epistle to Philadelphia is tinctured with the style of this passage. Comp. Exod. xi. 8. Dan. ii. 46.—With regard to *the church at Philadelphia* ; that city was less frequented, on account of the frequent earthquakes by which it was disturbed, more than any other city in Asia (Strabo, Geogr. lib. xiv.) and hence the angel of the church there is said to have but a little strength, or a *small force*. (See note.) *The synagogue of Satan* appears to include all false professors of the true religion, whether by birth Jews or Gentiles. (Comment. ii. 9.) In the epistle attributed to Ignatius in the reign of Trajan, he exhorts them not to listen to those who should preach to them Judaism “for it is better (says he) to hear Christianity from one who is circumcised, than Judaism from one who is uncircumcised.” From which perhaps it may be inferred that some Gentiles, without being circumcised themselves, yet preached the law. Comp. Gal. vi. 13. In that epistle however they are still applauded for their union among themselves, notwithstanding seducers had been among them ; and it seems also to speak with hope of some who should repent and come into the union of the church. §. 2. 3. To what extent those false professors, whether they were nominally Jews or Christians, came to reverence the church at Philadelphia, and

to acknowledge the love of the Saviour to it, does not appear from any records of antiquity extant. With regard to *the Holy Catholic Church* of this period ; as to the fact of its little strength, or *small force*, it is but too obvious, that however her numbers may be large in comparison with those of the preceding period, whose eminent members were but “a few names ;” yet, on the other side, in comparison with the world of false professors about her, they have still amounted only to a small force ; and how much farther that small force may yet be reduced by prevailing temptations, who shall venture to determine ? As to *the future* involved in this promise my *conjecture* is (Μαυτὶς δ’ ἄριστος ὅστις ἐκκαλεῖται καλῶς) that a body of men will yet arise (whether they shall be Jews or Gentiles, or both), men who shall justly be denominated *a synagogue of Satan*, for their falsehood and violence ; a part of whom shall be compelled by irresistible evidence, to render homage to that part of the church who shall either belong to the *Philadelphian period*, or at least shall partake of the *Philadelphian spirit*. This prediction is connected, though obscurely, with a subsequent vision, which yet remains to be fulfilled in its largest sense. “And after three days and a half a spirit of life from God entered into them, and they rose up on their feet ! *And great fear fell*

upon those that gazed on them. And they heard a loud voice out of heaven saying to them, Ascend hither; and they ascended up into heaven in a cloud, and *their enemies gazed after them.*" xi. 11, 12. If this be correct, here is another intimation that the church in the end of the present dispensation shall be found to assume a fourfold character of a mixed Thyatiran, Sardian, Philadelphian and Laodicean spirit. Arethas, one of the earliest, and Dean Woodhouse, one of the latest commentators, conjecture that the conversion of the Jews is here foretold. This at least is certain, that the greatest attention to this promise is excited as a main motive to perseverance, for it is twice repeated: "*Behold, I will give thee out of the synagogue of Satan—Behold, I will make them to come and do homage at thy feet, and to know that I have loved thee.*—He renews the expression of his approbation, accompanied by a second promise.

2. *Because thou hast kept the word of my patience, I also will keep thee out of that hour of trial which is about to come upon the whole world, to try the inhabitants of the earth. I am coming quickly: hold fast what thou hast, that no one take thy crown.* The word of my patience implies persecution, which both the example and the command of our Lord calls us to endure

with patient expectation of his appearing. 1 Pet. ii. 20-21 ; Matt. xvi. 24 ; Rom. v. 3. That persecution is also implied, *shall be accompanied by a peculiar trial*, which is about to try the inhabitants of the earth, or of the territory of the ancient Roman empire. (Luke ii. 1. Dion. Hal. Diod. Sic. in proem. Cic. iv. ep. 7.) It is to be observed that the expression is not, *I will keep thee out of that trial*, which might have implied a total exemption from it ; but, *I will keep thee out of that hour of trial*, which gives a latitude, and may imply only a preservation under it, or a power to resist it. The event must be the final expositor. But let it be observed, by all means, that this trial, whatever it be, is connected with the coming of the Lord. Comp. Dan. xii. 1. The expression *I am coming quickly*, is in this prophecy repeatedly restricted to the *personal* coming of the Lord to judgment. See i. 3 ; xxii. 7, 12, 20. But he adds, “hold fast what thou hast”—retain thy faith and profession. So it was said to Pergamos, “thou holdest fast my name—even in those days in which Antipas was slain.” 11, 13. And to Thyatira, at a time when their *patience* was tried, and they had already *burden* enough, it was said, “that which ye have hold fast until I come.” ii. 19, 24, 25. So here the crown of victory was ready to be placed upon their brows, yet must they hold it fast, as

it were with both hands. First with regard to *the church at Philadelphia*, that it had already kept the word of the Lord's *patience*, previous to the date of the Apocalypse, is certain from this epistle. By the future *trial*, out of which it was promised that it should be kept, was probably intended the whole series of Pagan persecution which was then about to rage with more vehemence. In that local persecution in which Polycarp afterwards fell, we are informed that he was the twelfth, together with those of *Philadelphia*, who suffered." (Eus. H. E. iv. 15. See Comment, ii. 10). Now as Polycarp suffered at *Smyrna*, and these twelve suffered apparently with him, it seems to follow that the church of Philadelphia itself escaped at that time. Even the angel of that church seems to have escaped, or he would probably have been mentioned by name in the martyrdom of Polycarp. How far this church escaped besides is not on record; but it is curious to observe Gibbon, apparently allured by one of the figures of this epistle, giving a sort of comment upon it. Speaking of the subjection of *the city* to the Turks, A.D. 1312. "Philadelphia alone, says he, had been saved *by prophecy* or courage. At a distance from the sea, forgotten by the Emperors, encompassed on all sides by the Turks, her valiant sons defended their religion and freedom above four score

years, and at length capitulated with the proudest of the Ottomans. Among the Greek colonies and cities of Asia, Philadelphia is still erect, *a column in a scene of ruins*; a pleasing example that the paths of honor and safety may sometimes be the same." (Gibbon vi. 314). Philadelphia to this day contains a flourishing community of Christians. (Comment ii. 10). But how could the church at Philadelphia hold fast its crown of victory till the personal coming of the Lord? For whatever is said in the *argument* of each epistle, is said to the church as a community. This will depend on the event of a church existing there at that time, and on the conduct of that church. With regard to *the Holy Catholic Church* of this period; it is to be inferred, as already has been observed, from the expression, "thou hast kept the word of *my patience*," that it shall yet be exposed to persecution. The word *ὑπόμνη* is only found in the three epistles to Ephesus, Thyatira, and Philadelphia. (ii. 2, 19; iii. 10); and in these the Holy Catholic Church is predicted as contending with the violence of paganism, of the papacy and of infidelity; "the way of Cain, the error of Balaam, and the gainsaying of Coreh." (Morning Watch, vol. ii. 764.) Whether this *persecution* shall overtake the church of the Philadelphian *period*, or rather that part of it which

shall maintain, though in the last period, a Philadelphian *spirit*, the event alone can shew. In the subsequent visions of the prophecy *persecution which is yet future* is foretold. “And it was given him to make war with the saints and to conquer them. And authority was given him over every tribe, and people, and tongue and nation; and all the inhabitants of the earth shall worship him; whose names are not written in the book of life—of the lamb which was slain—from the foundation of the world. If any one have an ear, let him hear. If any one lead in captivity, into captivity shall he be led. If any one will slay with the sword, with the sword must he be slain. *Here is the patience and the faith of the saints.*” xiii. 6-10. Correspondent with which is the following passage: “And a third angel followed them, saying with a loud voice, If any one worship the wild beast and his image, and receive his mark upon his forehead, or upon his hand, the same shall drink of the wine of the wrath of God—mingled and strong in the cup of his indignation; and shall be tormented with fire and sulphur in the presence of the holy angels, and in the presence of the Lamb. And the smoke of their torment shall ascend for ever and ever; and they shall have no rest day nor night, who worship the wild beast and his image, and if any one receives the mark of

his name. *Here is the patience of the saints. Here are they that keep the commandments of God, and the faith of Jesus.*" xiv. 9-12. There are also distinct hints of a preservation out of the hour of trial. I allude to two passages—(1.) "*Hurt not the earth, nor the sea, nor the trees, until we shall have sealed the servants of our God upon their foreheads.*" vii. 3. And (2.) A select body of one hundred and forty-four thousand, sealed on their foreheads, (and distinct from the four living creatures and the elders) are introduced, of whom it is said, "These are they who were not defiled with women, for they are virgins. These are they who follow the Lamb whithersoever he leadeth. *These were redeemed from among men, first fruits to God and to the Lamb*; and in their mouth falsehood was not found, for they are blameless." xiv. 1-5. It is the business of the commentator on these two passages to shew that they both refer to the same period of time. I merely refer to them, for the present, for the general purpose of shewing that a connexion, more or less obvious, exists between the argument of all these epistles, and the subsequent visions of the prophecy, and so to confirm, at least in some degree, the exposition of their prophetic sense.

III. *The Epilogue.* v. 12, 13.

1. The promise is twofold.

(1.) *He that overcometh, I will make him a pillar in the temple of my God, and from it shall he never more be cast out.*—Pillars laden with trophies, or engraven with inscriptions, were commonly erected in honour of eminent persons. 2 Sam xviii. 18. But there is probably an allusion here to those two conspicuous pillars in the temple of Solomon, named Jachin and Boaz, i. e. foundation and strength, which were afterwards carried off to Babylon. 1 Kg. vii. 21 ; Jer. liii. 17. Comp. Prov. ix. 1.) Of the temple to which we are brought even on earth, all are *living stones*, some are *as pillars*. Heb. xii. 21, 22 ; 1 Cor. iii. 17 ; 1 Pet. ii. 5 ; Gal. ii. 9. It may admit of a question, whether it be implied here that any individuals of the church shall in any sense have been cast out, as those pillars were transported to Babylon. Comp. v. 16. But this is certain, that a period is predicted, in “which the Lord God Almighty and the Lamb are the temple;” when they who overcome in the last conflict shall be the pillars, and “his name shall be in their foreheads.” See xxi. 22 ; xxii. 3, 4 ; Gal. ii. 9. He adds a second promise.

(2.) *And I will write upon him the name of my God, and the name of the city of my God (the New Jerusalem, which is coming down out of heaven from my God) and my name, my new one.*—Here are three names. (1.) *The name of my God*; Jehovah, who ever lives to fulfil his promises, both to Abraham, and to his seed—which is Christ mystical, both the head and the members. *Exod. vi. 3; Gen. xvii. 8; Gal. iii. 16.* (2.) *The name of the city of my God.* It has been conjectured that an allusion is insinuated here to the fact, that Philadelphia had lately received the addition of *Flavian*, in honour of the Emperor Vespasian, (*Zornius ap. F. Stosch Syntagma de nominibus 7 Urb. Apoc. p. 159.*) Philadelphia to this day is called *Allah Shehr*, “the city of God.” But it is evident, that the promise points to a subsequent vision of the prophecy. “And the holy city, new Jerusalem, I saw descending out of Heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband.” *xxi. 2. 10. Comp. Isai. lxii. 2. Jer. xxxiii. 16. Ezek. xlviii. 35.* And (3) *My name, my new one.* His name of old is, the *word of God*; but his new one is, *King of Kings and Lord of Lords.* *xix. 13. 16*—“a name above every name;” “the God of the whole earth shall he be called.” *Phil. ii. 9. Isai. liv. 5.* This also points to a subsequent vision already re-

ferred to :—" And I beheld, and lo, the lamb standing upon Mount Zion, and with him an hundred and forty-four thousand, *having his name* (ed. Griesb.) *and the name of his Father written upon their foreheads.*" xiv. 1. See the contrast, xiii. 16.—Take the three together, and they should be *eminently*, " the members of Christ, the children of God, and inheritors of the kingdom of Heaven."

2. *He that hath an ear, let him hear what the spirit saith to the churches.*

If there be any prophetic allusion in the name of this city, Philadelphia, it cannot be to any part of the internal character of the church, but to its external condition ; as the city is the external situation of the church. *Brotherly love* is the characteristic of the Holy Catholic Church of *every period*. 1 John, iii. 14. Neither is there any thing in the argument of this epistle which directly marks this church as more eminent than others in this respect. But if there be any allusion to its external condition, it must be to that preservation out of the hour of trial which shall extort even from her enemies the confession that *the Lord hath loved them*, and we know that " he is not ashamed to call them *brethren.*" Heb. ii. 11, 12. ΦΙΛΑΔΕΛΦΕΙΑ signifies

love of the brethren. And here I cannot but remark the curious coincidence, that in London, the metropolis as it were of Christendom, a great public building, Exeter Hall, erected for the meetings of religious and charitable societies (which is a standing evidence of the character of the age, and of the door which has been set open before us) has actually been inscribed with this very name, although unwittingly and solely for the purpose of recommending Christian charity. Rom. xii. 10. Heb. xiii. 1. 1 Pet. i. 22. See Missionary Register, 1830, p. 200.) It bears however upon its portico, in Greek characters, the inscription—ΦΙΛΑΔΕΛΦΕΙ'ΟΝ.

THE EPISTLE TO LAODICEA.

- III.—14 Καὶ τῷ ἀγγελῷ τῆς ἐν Λαοδικείᾳ ἐκ-
κλησίας γράψον· τάδε λέγει ὁ ἀμὴν, (ὁ μάρ-
τυς ὁ πιστὸς καὶ ἀληθινός,) ἡ ἀρχὴ τῆς κτί-
σεως τῷ Θεῷ.
- 15 Οἶδα σε τὰ ἔργα, ὅτι ἔτε ψυχρὸς εἶ, ἔτε
ζεστός· ὅφελον ψυχρὸς ᾤης, ἢ ζεστός. Οὕτως,
ὅτι χλιαρὸς εἶ, καὶ ἔτε ζεστός ἔτε ψυχρὸς,
- 17 μέλλω σε ἐμέσαι ἐκ τῷ στόματός μου. Ὅτι
λέγεις· ὅτι πλῆσιος εἰμὶ, καὶ πεπλῆτῃκα,
καὶ ἔδενός χρέϊαν ἔχω· καὶ ἐκ οἶδας, ὅτι
σὺ εἶ ὁ ταλαίπωρος καὶ ὁ ἐλεεινός, καὶ πτω-
χὸς καὶ τυφλὸς καὶ γυμνός· συμβουλεύω σοι
ἀγοράσαι παρ' ἐμοῦ χρυσίον πεπυρωμένον ἐκ
πυρός, ἵνα πλετήσῃς καὶ ἱμάτια λευκά, ἵνα
περιβάλῃ, καὶ μὴ φανερωθῇ ἡ αἰσχύνῃ τῆς
γυμνότητός σε· καὶ κολλῆριον ἐγχρίσαι τῷ
19 ὀφθαλμῷ σου, ἵνα βλέπῃς. Ἐγὼ ὅσος ἐὰν
Φιλῶ, ἐλέγχω καὶ παιδεύω· ζήλωσον ἑν καὶ

20 μετανόησον. Ἴδὲ, ἔζηκα ἐπὶ τὴν θύραν, καὶ κρῶ, εἰάν τις ἀκούσῃ τῆς φωνῆς μου, καὶ ἀνοίξῃ τὴν θύραν· καὶ εἰσελεύσομαι πρὸς αὐτόν, καὶ δειπνήσω μετ' αὐτοῦ, καὶ αὐτὸς μετ' ἐμοῦ.

21 Ὁ νικῶν, δώσω αὐτῷ καθίσαι μετ' ἐμοῦ ἐν τῷ θρόνῳ μου, ὡς καὶ γὰρ ἐνίκησα, καὶ ἐκάθισα
22 μετὰ τοῦ πατρὸς μου ἐν τῷ θρόνῳ αὐτοῦ. Ὁ ἔχων ὄψιν, ἀκυσάτω τὸ πνεῦμα λέγει ταῖς ἐκκλησίαις.

III.—14. *And to the angel of the church at Laodicea, write; Thus saith the Amen—the faithful and true witness; the Prince of the Creation of God.*

V. 14. *The prince.*—"There is reason to believe that ἀρχὴ in this passage is not properly rendered 'beginning.' In Mark x. 6, xiii. 19; 2 Pet. iii. 4, indeed, the phrase ἀρχὴ τῆς κτίσεως clearly signifies 'the beginning of the creation;' the word *beginning* in these instances importing nothing more than the *commencement*. But when ἀρχὴ is applied to a *person*, it mostly signifies the chief, the principal, frequently the prince, the commander. In these cases it corresponds with the Hebrew שׂרָף, *caput*, as in many places of the Septuagint version. For example, Αὗται αἱ ἀρχαὶ πατριῶς Λευιτῶν. These are the *heads* of the family of the Levites. Ex. vi. 25. Ἐδωκαν ἀρχὴν. They appointed a *captain*. Neh. ix. 17. Γαλαὰδ σύ μοι ἀρχὴ τοῦ Λιβάνου. Galaad, thou art the *head* of Libanus. Jer. xxii. 6. Θήσονται ἑαυτοῖς ἀρχὴν μίαν. They shall appoint for themselves one *head*. Hos. i. 11. Ἀρχαὶ οἴκου Ἰακώβ. The *princes* of the house of Jacob. Mic. iii. 1. By the writers of

15. *I know thy works, that thou art neither cold nor hot. I would thou wert cold or hot!*
 16. *So then, because thou art lukewarm, and neither hot nor cold, I am about to vomit thee*
 17. *out of my mouth.—Since thou sayest I am rich, and have made my fortune, and of nothing have I need; and knowest not that thou art most wretched and miserable—both*

the N. T. ἀρχαὶ powers, is frequently used for ἀρχοντες, rulers. Vide Luke xii. 11; Rom. viii. 38; Eph. iii. 10, vi. 12; Col. i. 16. In Col. i. 18, Christ is himself denominated ἀρχὴ, apparently in the sense of chief or principal. Lastly, in Rev. i. 5, a parallel passage, Jesus is described as ὁ ἀρχὼν τῶν βασιλέων τῆς γῆς. ‘The Ruler of the kings of the earth.’ See Rosenmüller in loc.” The above valuable criticism is borrowed from Mr. Gurney’s Biblical Notes, No. 12, p. 191, ed. 1. The same rendering is maintained by Ernesti, Kütner, Newcome, and Daubuz. The latter, with his usual learning, shews that this use of ἀρχή, the abstract for the concrete, obtains also in classic Greek, in the same manner as *potestas* in the lower Latinity. He quotes also Tertullian (adv. Hermogenem. c. xix.) “Ἀρχὴ non tantum ordinativum, sed et potestativum capit principium.” And adds, that thus a propriety is observed in making the *prince* to promise, that “he who overcometh shall sit with him in his *throne*.” I may add, that the whole is confirmed by the fact, that the title to this epistle is a plain and obvious reference to Isai. lv. 4. “Behold I have given him for a *witness* to the people, a *ruler* and commander to the people.” In the Septuagint, Ἰδὲ μαρτύριον ἐν ἔθνεσιν ἔδωκα αὐτὸν, ἀρχοντα καὶ προστάσσοντα ἔθνεσιν. In the former place, Rev. v. 1, the *very word* of the Sept. is adopted, ἀρχὼν. In this parallel place the *style* of the Sept. is adopted, ἀρχή, as in Col. i. 18.

V. 16. *So then*.—Brightman, after Stevens, maintains that by ἔως is implied the form of an oath; like יְשׁוּעָה, *surely*. Isai. liii. 4. “*Sic te Diva potens Cypri*.” Hor. i. od. 4.

V. 17. *Most wretched and miserable*.—It is observable that these two words ταλαίπωρος and ἡλεεινός are only used once each in the N. T. to describe the utmost degree of spiritual and temporal wretchedness. Rom. vii. 24; 1 Cor. xv. 19. Here they are both combined, and each has besides the emphatic article prefixed. For the Hebrew אֵל is frequently used emphatically before adjectives.

18. *poor, and blind, and naked; I counsel thee to buy of me gold refined from the fire that thou mayest grow rich; and white garments that thou mayest be clothed, and the shame of thy nakedness may not appear; and eye salve to anoint thine eyes, that thou mayest*
19. *see. As many as ever I love, I rebuke and chastise; be zealous therefore and repent.—*
20. *Behold I stand at the door and knock: if any one will hear my voice and open the door, I will even come in unto him, and will sup with him, and he with me.*
21. *He that overcometh, I will give him to sit with me in my throne; as I also overcame, and sat down with my father in his throne.—*
22. *He that hath an ear, let him hear what the spirit saith to the churches.*

tives, and the article here may be considered as its substitute. See Noldius, p. 212; Middleton in loc. As the angel of this church is represented as conceitedly exaggerating his own acquirements, so the Lord abases him in proportion. His extreme wretchedness is made up of three particulars; that he was *poor*, and *blind*, and *naked*. The counsel corresponds: Buy, that thou mayest be *rich*—that thou mayest be *clothed*—and that thou mayest *see*.

V. 20.—*I will even come in unto him.*—This use of $\kappa\alpha\lambda\iota$ is common. Matt. x. 30, xv. 16, xxiii. 14; Luke ix. 5, xi. 4, (where Pasor, Gr. Sacr. p. 440, surely is mistaken in thinking it redundant) xiii. 7, xix. 42; Gal. ii. 16; and even in these epistles, Rev. ii. 13. See also Soph. Trachin. 767; Thucyd. vii. 75; Iliad E 362. Schleusner, quoting Xen. de Mag. Equit. v. 4, adds, “ad quem locum docuit Zeunius, $\kappa\alpha\lambda\iota$, significans *etiam*, a Græcis quoque *ab initio membri collocari*. Sic γ Hebræorum Lev. vii. 16; Thren. iii. 32.” In the Latin writers after Cicero *et* is used for *etiam*.

COMMENT.

I. *The Proem*, v 14.

1. *And to the angel of the church at Laodicea, write.*—Laodicea was situated next to Philadelphia to the South-east, and like her neighbour was exposed to frequent earthquakes. The church at Laodicea was addressed last, because it was to be a type of the Holy Catholic church of the last apocalyptic period; *a period which will be marked at its beginning by another relapse, and at its end by the coming of the Lord to his millennial reign, whatever that reign may be.*

2. *Thus saith the Amen—the faithful and true Witness—the Prince of the creation of God.*—See the preceding note and comment on i. 5. *The faithful and true witness*, defines the indeclinable Hebrew noun *amen*. A medal of Laodicea is extant, in which *Zeus* is styled *φιλανήθης*. (Harduin Num. Ant. p. 92). But the reference is plainly to Isai. lv. 4, with perhaps some allusion to Isai. lxxv. 16. Not that *amen* is there used as a proper name, but in the state of construction; “shall bless himself in *the God of Truth.*” He is the sworn witness. (See Vitring. Obs. Sacr. iii. 1, § 4, 5). These titles are most appropriate to the argument of the epistle. There

can be no greater guard against lukewarmness than a firm persuasion of the truth of the divine promises. Being now about to demonstrate the truth of all his promises and of his threats too, he assumes also his highest title of sovereignty. He is "the Ruler of the kings of the earth"—"King of kings and Lord of lords"—"the Prince of the creation of God," whether of the old creation, or of the new heavens and the new earth. (See i. 5 ; xvii. 14 ; xix. 16. Col. i. 15-23 ; Rev. xxi. 1-5).

II. *The Argument*, v. 15-20.

1. He begins with the main body of this church, and (1) addresses them in the language of tremendous denunciation. (2) He adds a very earnest counsel and exhortation to repentance.

(1.) *I know thy works, that thou art neither cold nor hot ! I would thou wert cold or hot ! So then, because thou art lukewarm, and neither hot nor cold, I am about to vomit thee out of my mouth.*—The country round Laodicea was full of hot springs and exhalations. The church at Laodicea, *neither hot nor cold*, maintained a Christian profession in the total absence of a Christian spirit—a dangerous malady and even

disgusting. *I would thou wert hot or cold!* is the language of a fervent zeal in him that uses it; like that of Elijah; "How long halt ye between two opinions? If the Lord be God *follow* him; but if Baal, then follow *him*." 1 Kg. xviii. 21. Water which is lukewarm is wont to create nausea. In the strong image of the text, there may be an allusion, as Vitringa thinks, to the very site of the city (χώρα ἐυσείσης. Strabo) ready at any time to eject its inhabitants; but it is undoubtedly borrowed from one of the strongest expressions concerning the loathsomeness of sin to be found in the Old Testament. "The land is defiled; therefore I do visit the iniquity thereof upon it; and the land itself vomiteth out her inhabitants. Ye shall keep my statutes, that the land spue not you out also when ye defile it." Lev. xviii. 25-28. Comp. Jer. xiv. 19; Zec. xi. 8. It is particularly to be observed, that this is not a conditional threat; it is an absolute denunciation (μέλλω) I am about to do it. (See Note). Here it is especially necessary to recollect, that whatever is said in the argument of each epistle is addressed to the Church as a community, represented in the person of their angel. His elect as *individuals* none shall pluck out of his hand; but as a *community* he may for a time unchurch and disown them, and so cast them out of his mouth.

With regard to *the church at Laodicea* it was probably early infested by the Gnostics. Col. ii. 8. iv. 16. And the Gnostics maintained that it was a matter merely indifferent, either in a time of peace to partake of idol sacrifices, or in time of persecution to deny Christ. (Origen contr. Cels. vi. Eus. iv. 6. Tertut. adv. Gnost. c. 12.) The church at Laodicea existed and flourished long after the date of the Apocalypse; and about the middle of the fourth century a celebrated council was held there. (Beveridge Pand. tom. ii. p. 193.) But it has been long since rejected and unchurched. At present "the very site of Laodicea is even more solitary than that of Ephesus. The latter has a prospect of a rolling sea, now and then enlivened by a whitening sail: the former sits in a widowed loneliness; its walls are grass-grown, its temples desolated, its very name has perished." (Emerson's Letters quoted by Milner, History of the Seven Churches. With regard to *the Holy Catholic Church* of the last Apocalyptic period, just preceeding the Millennial reign, we are hereby warned both of its character and its destiny. As to its *character* it is but too probable that at any time when iniquity shall abound, the love of many may wax cold, for such things have been. 1 King xviii. 21. Matt. xxiv. 11, 12. But why should more displeasure be expressed against Laodicea

than against Sardis ? The church at Sardis " had a name to live, but was dead." Laodicea was not dead but lukewarm, yet is she to be rejected ; and why ? Is it only said for the sake of preserving the figure ? or is the threat to be executed as an act of arbitrary justice ? No, but because the last Apocalyptic period of the church shall be marked by an indifference which to us, at present, must be mysterious. The Apostle Paul argues with the Gentiles Christians that their rejection is a possible case. " Thou wilt say then the branches were broken off, that I might be grafted in. Well, because of unbelief they were broken off, and thou standest by faith. *Be not high minded but fear : for if God spared not the natural branches, take heed lest he also spare not thee.*" Rom. xi. 19-21. In this epistle to Laodicea the rejection of them as a community is actually denounced, as their deserved *destiny*. Comp. Matt. xxi. 43. To lighten this difficulty, it is to be remarked that the church at Laodicea is still the type of the Holy Catholic Church, and though spoken of with this mysterious severity, they are also spoken of as beloved still. v. 19. It is to be remembered too, that in all past ages of the church, its zeal has ever revived under persecution. After all, the rejection here threatened probably intends *the permission of persecution to an overwhelming extent, just before*

the millennial reign; and this appears to be confirmed by farther *internal evidence*, in the death and disgrace of the two witnesses. “And when they shall have finished their testimony, that wild beast which shall ascend out of the abyss shall wage war with them, and shall conquer them, and shall slay them; and their corpse shall lie in that wide and great city, which spiritually is called Sodom and Egypt, where also their Lord was crucified. And they of the peoples, and tribes, and tongues, and nations shall look on their corpse three days and a half, and their corses shall they not suffer to be laid in the grave. And the inhabitants of the earth shall rejoice over them, and shall exult, and shall send presents one to another—because these two prophets tormented the inhabitants of the earth.” xi. 7-10. He adds very earnest counsel and exhortation to repentance.

(2.) *Since thou sayest I am rich, and have made my fortune, and of nothing have I need; and knowest not that thou art most wretched and miserable—both poor, and blind, and naked; I counsel thee to buy of me gold refined from the fire that thou mayest grow rich; and white garments that thou mayest be clothed, and the shame of thy nakedness may not appear; and eye-salve to anoint thine eyes, that thou mayest see. As*

many as ever I love, I rebuke and chastise ; Be zealous therefore and repent.—Vitranga is of opinion that there may be an allusion here to the circumstances of the city Laodicea, which was very opulent, and famous especially for its flocks and fleeces, which were of the finest texture, and of the most shining *black*. (Strabo Geogr. xii.) The luxury of its citizens is still legible on its site, in the ruins of its theatres and other sumptuous edifices. A spiritual pride and conceit, as if their moral condition were as prosperous as their temporal, marked them, in the eye of the Lord, for the very reverse—as wretched in their moral as Lazarus was in his temporal poverty ; and worse, for to be wretched to that degree, and yet not to know it, is a kind of lunacy. Comp. Hos. 12, 8 ; Isai. lxxv. 5 ; Luke xviii. 11 ; 1 Cor. iv. 8. This counsel is so important, that it demands a moment's amplifications. They were poor as to *faith* ; (the very reverse of Smyrna, ii. 9.) let them buy of him that gold refined from the fire. 1 Pet. i. 7 ; iv. 12. They were naked as to *righteousness* ; let them buy of him those white garments, and “ put on Christ.” Gen. iii. 21 ; Isai. lxi. 10 ; Gal. iii. 27 ; Rom. xiii. 14 ; Col. iii. 10. Comp. Rev. xiv. 15 ; xix. 8. They were blind as to *knowledge* ; let them buy of him that eye-salve, that they might see, both their own abject con-

dition, and the calling, inheritance, and mighty power of God. Καὶ ὑμεῖς χρῖσμα ἔχετε ἀπο τῆς Ἀγίας, καὶ οἶδατε πάντα. 1 John ii. 20, 27. Comp. John ix. 6; Job xlii. 5, 6; Eph. i. 18-23. *Earnestly strive* (Isai. lv. 1; Matt. xiii. 46) to obtain of me this gold, as I am your king; these garments, as I am your priest; this eye-salve, as I am your prophet. (Le Moyne, Dissert. in Jer. xxiii. 6, c. 5, § 6.) He concludes with reminding them of the general rule of his government—for he speaks as the prince of the creation of God; that if his counsel be rejected, they must taste then of his chastisement, even because he loved them. It cannot be doubted that such counsel was suited to *the church at Laodicea*; and as little that it is calculated for the *Holy Catholic Church* of the last apocalyptic period, just before its final triumph. So just before its triumph over pagan Rome, it had sunk in character, and was chastised and purified by the Diocletian rage. Euseb. viii. 1, 2. Having thus exhorted the main body of this church, he adds a special promise.

2. *Behold I stand at the door and knock. If any one will hear my voice and open the door, I will even come in unto him, and will sup with him, and he with me.*—He had set before the church at Philadelphia an open door; he stands

before the door of the church at Laodicea though closed against him ; and he promises that he will sup with them in his kingdom of grace, John xiv. 21-23, and that they shall sup with him in his kingdom of glory. To eat at the King's table is the highest honor of the subject. 1 Sam. xx. 29 ; 2 Sam. ix. 10-13 ; xix. 28 ; 1 Kg. ii. 7. But here is more grace ; for as to Sardis he had threatened to come as a *thief*, so to Laodicea he promises to come as a *bridegroom*. It is an allusion to the Song of Solomon. v. 1-6. Comp. ii. 3 ; iv. 10, 16. We have the proper comment in our Lord's words—" Let your loins be girded about, and your lights burning, and ye yourselves like unto men that wait for their Lord, when he will return from the wedding ; that when he cometh and knocketh, they may open to him immediately." Luke xii. 35. The *internal evidence* does not fail us here. The promise points forward to that *voice*. " Blessed are they who are called to the marriage-feast of the Lamb." xix. 5, 9. Comp. Isai. xxv. 6.

III. *Epilogue*, v. 21, 22.

1. *He that overcometh, I will give him to sit with me in my throne ; as I also overcame and sat down with my Father in his throne.*—Thrones in the East were extended beyond the seat ap-

propriated to the monarch, and allowed of his honoring others with a place beside him (De Dieu). The throne and the feast are here united. Τότε—ἐ μόνον συμπόλης των Θεῶν, ἔση ἀλλὰ καὶ συνάρχων. Epict. 21. The Father's throne is a dignity communicable to none except the Son. xxii. 1 ; Ps. cx. 1. But he that overcometh shall be exalted to the same glory as the human nature of our Lord. 1 Cor. xv. 25 ; see Vitringa Obs. Sacr. iv. c. 4, 5. Comp. ii. 26 ; Dan. vii. 13, 14, 27 ; Luke xxii. 29 ; 2 Tim. ii. 12. This promise looks forward to the end of the prophecy. "And they lived and *reigned* with Christ the thousand years"—"and they shall *reign* for ever and ever." xx. 4-7 ; xxii. 5.

2. *He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith to the Churches.*

If there be any prophetic allusion intended in the name of this city, Laodicea, it must be to the peculiar dispensation of this period, the internal rejection of this church. v. 16. Quasi λαῖς δίκη *the judgment of his people*. See F. Stosch. Syntag. p. 195.

GENERAL REVIEW.

HAVING now completed my task, there remains only to take a general review of the whole, just to collect the result of the Analysis ; and the result I trust will be found to be an exemplification of the following general truth. "The flow of time has of necessity brought with it the accomplishment of many of the figurative prophecies of the historical types ; and thus, for those who shall in all diligence and humility dedicate themselves to the search for them, there are new weapons of warfare, offensive and defensive in store, in unexplored parts of the arsenal of the Christian army." (Sir G. Rose, *Christian Researches*, pref. p. 27.)

The Revelation, after its title and introduction, prefixed as to other books, divides itself into three principal parts, each preceded by a grand introductory hieroglyphic. The first part, which I have attempted to elucidate in these pages, consists of two divisions : first, *the narrative*, which describes the scene of the vision, (the isle of Patmos) ; the hieroglyphic, of one like a son of man walking amidst seven golden

lamp stands ; and the key to it, or explanation : the second division embraces *the seven epistles*.

In some things the seven epistles all agree. Each of them is regularly composed of a proem, an argument, and an epilogue. *The proem* of each begins with announcing its author, by a description taken from some part or other of the preceding hieroglyphic ; but always appropriate to the contents of the epistle itself.—*The argument* of each epistle begins invariably with that solemn declaration of omniscience, extending to all ages, “ I know thy works.” It proceeds (1.) to describe the particular *character* of each church ; and (2.) to predict, in the form either of promise or threat, its future *destiny* ; mixed with suitable exhortation or counsel. As each proem refers to some part of the preceding description, so each argument connects itself, more or less obviously, with the subsequent visions of the prophecy. *I believe that I am able, still pursuing a strict analysis of the prophecy, to shew that the passages alleged completely correspond, in the series of events, with the several periods of these epistles.* It is this connexion with the subsequent visions of the prophecy which forms *the internal evidence* for the second sense of the epistles. To what extent a *complete system* of typification is to be discovered in the

sacred volume, is a subject for the gravest consideration. It cannot be doubted that the extent of typification in the Old Testament is so considerable, as to lead to the expectation of a similitude of character, in that respect, in the New Testament. The most wary can ask no more than *scriptural authority* in proof of the type. With regard to the Old Testament, Sir G. Rose has produced this authority with great success in proof that the first exodus of Israel was a type of another exodus yet future. (*Scriptural Researches*, p. 278.) I have attempted a similar proof with regard to the New Testament. For, as we know from *the direct authority of Scripture*, that the bond-woman Hagar was a type of the visible Church. (Gen. xvi. Gal. iv.) So this interlacing and intimate connexion between the predictive part of the main argument of each of these epistles, and the predictions of the subsequent visions of the prophecy is *the indirect authority of Scripture* to prove that the seven churches of Asia were types of the Holy Catholic Church through seven successive periods of time. The very name of each church, like the name of Hagar, appears to have some prophetic allusion. "For this Hagar," says the apostle, "is Mount Sinai in Arabia." Gal. iv. 25; Isai. liv. 1. The name, Hagar, which signifies *a fugitive*, signifies also *a rock*, and is the name given in Arabia to

Mount Sinai. (Bochart, Geogr. Sacr. iv. c. 11. Michaelis, Intr. to N. T.) The names also of the seven cities in Asia appear also to have had, by the strange providence of God, an allusion, always by rule applicable to the predicted external condition of the Church. Upon these grounds we arrive at the conclusion, that each epistle has a double sense, both *historic* and *prophetic*. Each contains, first, the *internal history* or character, and, secondly, the *external history* or destiny, both of each of the seven churches of Asia, and also of the Holy Catholic Church in each of seven successive periods of time. *This internal evidence* of the double sense I have endeavoured to confirm by ecclesiastical history, which is the *external evidence*.

The epilogues all agree together in this, that they contain a promise to *individuals*, always in harmony with the preceding arguments, and always looking forward to the victory and the rewards of the latter part of the prophecy ; and every one sees and acknowledges that these are addressed to the universal Church of Christ. But there is an important distinction in these epilogues, which serves to class the seven epistles into two unequal divisions : the first three go together, and the last four. This distinction is very palpably marked. Each of the first three

epilogues runs thus: "*He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith to the churches. To him that overcometh;*" then follows the promise appropriate to that church. But each of the four last epilogues runs thus. It begins with the words, "*He that overcometh;*" then follows the appropriate promise; and, lastly, it ends with the words, "*He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith to the churches.*" There is an inversion. In the first three, the attention is first demanded, and then follows the promise; but in the last four, the promise is first given, and then the attention is demanded. Nor is this all; for in the epilogue of the fourth epistle, which is the central piece, in addition to those words common to all, "*He that overcometh,*" it follows, "*And who keepeth my words until the end.*" This addition, which is peculiar to the epistle to the church at Thyatira, is made for the particular purpose, not only of subordinating the three last epistles to this, but also of shewing that all the four last epistles belong, in their second sense, to one generic period which *approaches to the end*, or the coming of the Lord.

"The entire subject of the Revelation," says a late writer, "is strongly marked by a system of chronological order. Subsequent and coincident periods of time are noted; and the course

and succession of events is made a part of prophecy as well as the events themselves. The effect of this chronological structure is a guard upon the reference of the several prophecies, whereby one of them checks the appropriation of another, and reduces it within a certain position, both as to series of time and dependance of history.” (Davison’s Warburton Disc. x. See also Hurd. Disc. x.) If there be any force in this remark, it will be much strengthened if it can be shewn to be applicable to every part of the book. And it now appears, I trust, that it is applicable to the foremost part of the book ; which can no more be severed, without loss, from the rest, than the head can be severed from the body. The seven epistles, besides their first or historic sense, are predictive both of the *character* and *destiny* of the Holy Catholic Church, through seven successive periods, extending from the date of the prophecy to the millennial reign of our Lord. The epistle to the church at *Ephesus* extends from the apostolic age to the reign of Decius, or the first universal persecution ; the epistle to *Smyrna*, from the reign of Decius to that of Constantine ; the epistle to *Pergamos*, from the age of Constantine to the age of Luther ; the epistle to *Thyatira*, from the age of Luther to the revocation of the edict of Nantz ; the epistle to *Sardis*, from that

revocation, to the era of the British and Foreign Bible Society; the epistle to *Philadelphia* through that era to some epoch yet unknown; and the epistle to *Laodicea* includes the last period preceding the millennial reign. These several periods embrace all the great successive changes which the spiritual Church has undergone, or will undergo previous to that reign. They embrace the primitive zeal which founded, and the spirit of martyrdom which cemented the fabric of the Church; the struggling perseverance of the little band which through all the darkness of the middle ages wrestled with the nominal but apostate church; the battle fought and won by the Reformers; the collapse of the reformed church, its late revival, and its future foretold indifference.

The objection therefore, that “no description of any of the seven churches will be found to quadrate with the long period of Gothic darkness”—falls of itself; for the description of the church at Pergamos quadrates with that period. Another objection, “that the epistle to Laodicea ought to contain the description of that victorious and purer period which we are to expect in the latter days”—is grounded on a misapprehension; for the whole prophecy, as well as these epistles, merely introduces the

second advent of our Lord at the commencement of that happy period, and then speedily winds up the burden of its song. Here too I may remark, after Jurieu, that the great inequality of duration in these several periods, ought not to be considered as an objection of any weight. Great eras are marked by great changes ; and time in which no change occurs counts for nothing. The latter changes succeed each other rapidly, as the great drama hastens through the catastrophe to its close. I have already observed that this was to be expected from the peculiar structure of the fourth epistle to Thyatira, which subordinates the three last to itself, and distinctly points to the approaching end. Hence also it is no wonder if the *characters* of the four last periods should blend into one another, so that it shall be difficult to say whereabouts are the limits of each ; as you cannot say of the colors of the bow, Here begins distinctly the violet, the indigo, or the blue. In these epistles, what is true of *the greater part*, is predicated of the *whole Church*. In like manner, what is true of the *main part of each period*, is predicated of the *whole period* : And this does not exclude, but rather implies a progressive development and corresponding decay of the distinguishing moral feature of each period.

Whether that *character* of lukewarmness and indifference which shall mark the last apocalyptic period of the Church, have already begun to creep upon us or not, time will discover. But as to the *destiny* of the Church in that period, it is written. "Few desire," says Vitranga, "to know their faults, much less to read them in prophecy." But who can doubt with what a trembling hand the angel of the church at Laodicea held that epistle as he read it to his church: with such a tremor should that same epistle be read by the ministers of the Holy Catholic Church of the last apocalyptic period. "All Scripture," said Gregory, "is *as it were* an epistle from Almighty God to his creature:" but this is *literally* an epistle addressed to the spiritual Church of the last period.

I cannot conclude without stating my conviction, that *the personal advent of the Lord before the millennial reign* is a doctrine confirmed, in their measure, by these epistles, their prophetic sense being fully understood. It can scarcely be denied that these words, "I come quickly," are repeatedly restricted, in this prophecy, to the sense of the personal advent of our Lord. "Behold, I come quickly; blessed is he that keepeth the words of the prophecy of this book,"

xxii. 7. "Behold, I come quickly ; and my reward is with me, to requite every one according as his work shall be." xxii. 12. Comp. Isai. xl. 10. "He that testified these things saith, Surely I come quickly." xxii. 20. In commenting on these epistles we have seen, that this expression, "I come quickly," is carefully to be distinguished from other expressions which are *apparently similar*. Observe how this matter is managed.—The church at *Ephesus* had remitted of her former love, and therefore is threatened ; *Repent and do thy first works, or else I will come to thee quickly and will remove thy lamp-stand out of its place :*" A threat of *angry visitation* which was never executed because she repented.—The church at *Smyrna* is blameless, and therefore is neither exhorted nor threatened at all.—In the church at *Pergamos* there was a little to blame, and therefore she is also threatened ; "*Repent, or else I will come to thee quickly ;*" namely, in *angry visitation*. To both these churches then, at *Ephesus* and *Pergamos*, a threat was denounced of coming to them (in the sense of angry visitation) but still with the condition reserved, unless they repented : they both did repent, and therefore no such visitation reached them.—But henceforth, in the four last epistles, the case is quite altered ; the coming of the Lord is stated, not as a threat, but as an event certainly

about to happen: and Bengel, who was no periodist, has observed that the coming of the Lord is announced as *nearer and nearer* in each of these epistles.

The church at *Thyatira*, although not altogether blameless, (for she had admitted a certain communion with evil) is yet praised, that her last works were more than the first. This was her character. With regard to her destiny, there is indeed a severe threat in that epistle against Jezebel and her adherents; but to the rest in *Thyatira*, there is no mention of any threat whatever, but rather a promise is given, that no more than their present burden should be laid upon them; yet notwithstanding it is added, "*Only that which ye have hold fast till I come.*" Observe, that in this very epistle in which a hint of the approaching end is given ("He that overcometh *and keepeth my works until the end,*" vi. 26,) the coming of the Lord is spoken of, without any threat, and without any reserved condition, *as a certain event*. Again, the church at *Sardis* has much worse against her, and she indeed is accordingly threatened: "*But if thou wilt not watch, I will come upon thee as a thief; and thou shalt in no wise know at what hour I will come upon thee.*" In which, if we will distinguish, there is the greatest difference from the former

threats. In those his *coming itself* is conditional ; but in this, it is only *the manner of his coming* which is conditional. Watch how she would, coming he is ; but if she watch not, upon her he will come *as a thief*. And, to shew that the force of the threat is laid on the circumstance of his manner of coming, it is added, *and thou shalt in no wise know at what hour I will come upon thee*. This very simile, too, of coming as a thief, had been already applied both by the Lord himself and by the apostles *to his second personal advent*, and is again repeated in this prophecy, xvi. 15 ; Matt. xxiv. 43 ; 1 Thess. v. 2 ; 2 Pet. iii. 10. Yet again, the church at *Philadelphia*, like that at *Smyrna*, is treated as if she was absolutely blameless, and, like her, hears only of praises and promises. But yet there is this remarkable difference between the two epistles addressed to them, that to the church at *Smyrna* nothing whatever is said of his coming, neither in the way of threat nor in any other way, but to the church at *Philadelphia* it is said, (not in the way of threat as before,) but in the way of promise, and as the prediction of a certain event, “ *Behold, I am coming quickly : hold fast what thou hast, that no one take thy crown ;*” using the very words by which his second personal advent is undeniably predicted in this prophecy, xxii. 7, 12, 20. Finally, the church

at *Laodicea* is both last and least of all. Without any reserve, a sentence of rejection is passed upon the church as a body ; yet there is annexed a particular promise : “ *Behold, I stand at the door and knock ; if any one will hear my voice and open the door, I will even come in unto him, and will sup with him, and he with me.*” He represents himself as now actually arrived and at the door. And let it be marked and laid to heart, that the simile of *the thief* here is dropped, and that of a *bridegroom* is assumed, predicting the peculiar privilege of those who shall watch for his coming. The contrast is so striking, and so much in harmony with our Lord’s own discourse concerning his second personal advent, that I cannot but conclude these remarks with a repetition of his own most solemn warning.

“ Fear not, little flock ; for it is your Father’s good pleasure to give you the kingdom. Sell that ye have, and give alms ; provide yourselves bags which wax not old, a treasure in the heavens that faileth not, where no thief approacheth, neither moth corrupteth. For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also. Let your loins be girded about and your lights burning, and ye yourselves like unto men that wait for their Lord, *when he will return from the wedding ; that when he cometh and knocketh, they*

may open unto him immediately. Blessed are those servants whom the Lord, when he cometh, shall find watching : Verily I say unto you, that he shall gird himself, and make them sit down to meat, and will come forth and serve them. And if he shall come in the second watch, or come in the third watch, and find them so, blessed are those servants. And this know, that if the good man of the house had known *what hour the thief would come*, he would have watched, and not have suffered his house to be broken through. Be ye therefore ready also, for the Son of man cometh at an hour when ye think not." Luke xii. 32-40.

ERRATA.

- Page 83, line 17, read *during the apostolic age*.
Page 83, line 19, read *Simon Magus*.
Page 100, line 7, for *liberal* read *literal*
Page 136, line 23, after *emancipation* add, *from the church of Rome*.
Page 157, line 10, for *liberal* read *literal*.
Page 175, line 3, after *persecution*, add *it*.

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